

"The word 'advertising' frustrates me" - Adam Byars

 By Jessica Tennant

26 Jun 2018

Adam Byars, co-MD and partner at Grid Worldwide, recently took part in a panel discussion at the *Sunday Times* Generation Next conference. The panel, 'Content and creative advertising to conquer the young minds behind the devices', entailed a creative advertising debate whereby ads were aired and rated by the audience in terms of those who loved them, hated them and didn't care.

Here, Byars tells us why the word 'advertising' frustrates him, about the good work HDI is doing in the youth marketing space, and that even the best marketers can learn something from its Junior Board of Directors...

■ **Why did you decide to take part in the panel; how did the opportunity come about?**

The youth of today are so important to our future, I was humbled by the invitation that HDI sent me to be seen as a speaker at this year's conference. Grid and HDI do a lot of work together and are looking to forge a much closer working relationship in future.



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Adam Byars

■ **During the discussion, you mentioned that the term 'advertising' should be done away with. Please elaborate.**

The word advertising frustrates me. It's old it has not place in the 21st Century. We should be focused on telling compelling stories, that resonate with people first and foremost. Find the human truth and/or insight that connects people with brands. Then explode it and tell the most beautiful story. Let's stop selling and rather focus on creating meaningful connections, brands with purpose.

■ **What do you think is the key to effective youth marketing?**

Connect, engage and talk with the youth, not at them like we do as adults.

■ **Of the adverts aired during your panel, what was: your favourite and why; your worst and why?**

I loved the Nando's ad: they're always on the money, relevant, funny and local. My worst was the Kia ad: clinched story line, terrible execution and treatment.

■ **Any recent ads that Grid has produced that target the youth effectively?**

We don't do any specific work that targets youth but we do expect all the work we produce to resonate with all South Africans including the youth. Our work must inspire and build a nation.



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■ **What are marketers getting right and wrong when targeting the youth with their ads?**

We get it right when the youth take it upon themselves to talk about a brand, or amongst themselves. We get it wrong when we talk to the youth like children.

■ **Being Youth Month, why do you think it's important to celebrate the youth and what is your view on the opportunities and challenges the youth face in the creative industry, and likewise, that advertisers face when marketing to them?**

We should be doing more as a nation to celebrate our youth. We should embrace their views on the world more often.

As an industry, we have lost our relevance of being one of the top five career choices. It saddens me that we have this perception that the creative industry is not a real career choice. We have an intrinsic platform at Grid called 'G in Culture'. It's a platform for a staff to achieve creative excellence, self-development and personal growth, and we're looking at how we can extend this into SME, schools and tertiary education institutions.



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■ **What was your key takeout from the panel and the conference as a whole?**

I was amazed at the confidence of the Junior Board of Directors. I had a young 8-year-old on my panel, Diogo who blew me away with his honesty and simple, uncomplex take on advertising.

We live in a complex world. We can learn so much from the youth around us. They have to deal with so much more than what the youth did 10 to 20 to 40 years ago... We need to take time to listen and not assume what worked so many years ago is still relevant today.

HDI must be commended for the work they do in the youth market, specifically the Junior Board of Directors. It's one of the most powerful platforms I have seen today. Even I was intimidated by their insights knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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