

We need to make more interesting advertising

By [Adrian Miller](#)

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There are cats on YouTube that are rather famous. The cats in question can flush toilets with their paws. An undeniably menial task for most of us, but for a cat, you have to admit, it's an evolutionary breakthrough of epic proportions.



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Millions of people have watched these YouTube videos - maybe in an effort to learn how to improve their own bathroom habits or for pure entertainment reasons. I'm going to go with the latter for the sake of this article.

Somewhere out there, right now, in an office cubicle, colleagues are gathered around a screen, coffee in hand, chuckling at these feline Darwinian leaps. People are posting these videos on Facebook. They are commenting on them and sharing them. And some people are rightfully showing these videos to their cats.

Equally, as mesmerising as watching a cat flushing a toilet, but slightly more disturbing, is watching someone burst a pimple. One rather graphic video, where someone squeezes a boil the size of a small volcano, has close to 13 million views on YouTube. This is a psychiatrist's wet dream and a marketer's wake-up call.

There are very few ads on YouTube that have garnered a few hundred thousand, let alone a few million organic views.

Perhaps the reason for this is that what we are creating isn't terribly interesting. Worryingly, a lot of our advertising isn't as captivating as a cat performing his daily ablutions or a ripe boil, positioned left of centre, on the back of a complete stranger.

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Let me put this another way.

If you produced an ad for a few million Rand and then spent more money putting a slightly different, but essentially the same version of that ad on every available platform, hoping to attract as many eyeballs as possible, but then lost out to a sebaceous cyst shot on an iPhone, you'd be wrongfully irate.

Howard Gossage, the advertising innovator, and iconoclast of the Mad Men era put it rather succinctly: “the real fact of the matter is, nobody reads ads. People read what interests them. And sometimes that's an ad”.

We are not playing in a special little box reserved just for us. Our advertising isn't competing against other advertising for the consumer's time.

It's competing against cats successfully using lavatories on YouTube, an Instagram picture of someone's ham sandwich, pseudo-profound self-help memes on Facebook and an episode of Game of Thrones on a streaming site.

If our audience doesn't think our messages are interesting, they won't want to share our messages, post thoughts about them or play with them. Which ultimately means they won't want to talk about our messages and spend time with the brand.

If you go by the adage that communications don't build brands, conversations do, this could present a slight problem in today's hyper-connected social world.

The exponential growth of technology has enabled the consumer to continually engage with interesting people and consume content they deem interesting, when and where and how they like. The consumer will never have to settle for boring again.

Our ultimate challenge as marketers is this then. Let's try to stop interrupting what people are interested in and be what people are interested in.

If we don't, the consequences could be dire. Cats with a penchant for lavatories and people popping zits will make our creative attempts seem feeble and misdirected.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adrian Miller is co-Founder and Executive Creative Director of +27 Advertising @plustwoseven. His career has seen him drive change in large multi-national agencies from Lowe Kuala Lumpur, Saatchi & Saatchi Malaysia, and JWT Delhi. He has raked in countless agency awards and been a judge at all the main awards shows. He sat on the creative boards for both Lowe and JWT.

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