

# SAB miller: spinning a yarn or bridging the gap?

By [Dr Kay Brügge](#)

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SAB has always been good at perpetuating the collectivist notion where personal identity and preference is wholly defined through relationship with others, including what beer must be consumed. Judging by the 'dekalitres' of its brew being quaffed, it has been successful in utilising mythical entities such as the "Charles Glass Society" as a catalyst to 'unite' people of different persuasions.

The 'non-conformists' have paid the price by being portrayed as *odd* (remember the bland, 'milk-drinking' group in the 'cricket match advertisement'?). In fact, they have been forced into the ultimate double-bind of, "if you stop drinking milk (that is if you become who you are *not*), we shall reward you by allowing you into the colourful, Castle drinking 'in-group'.

Now SABMiller has taken a bolder step by concretising the myth of a seamless 'global village', and pulling together not only cultures, but also whole continents. It has boldly stepped into the fold and harmonised post-modern disunity, fragmentation and eclecticism. Again, beer - the humble brew - serves as catalyst to succeed where others have failed: unifying a deeply divided world by dishing-up the ultimate myth one of friendly global cohabitation and tolerance - bringing order and unity into a chaotic world.

In the post era 9/11 era, the ad finds deep emotional resonance exactly because it alleviates some of the unpredictability and fear through the comfort of belonging to a 'collective' (tacitly building on the fictitious beer-drinking 'society') - even if it's version of reality is entirely driven by a brand. It cleverly uses the *Zulu Le Blanc's* (who himself bridges divides) tune as a vehicle to create emotional affinity for the notion of a global brother- and sisterhood - its membership having one simple admission requirement: loyalty to a particular brand.

Then again, the ad may be a clever strategy to re-emphasise SAB's commitment to (South) Africa in view of its substantial foreign interests. No easier way than to smooth-over the continental divide (the US and UK in which it has stakes, feature prominently - the conflict-torn regions are curiously absent). Perpetuating the notion of a single worldview and mythical tradition spawned by "Charles Glass" in an era of plurality and a burgeoning mass demand for authenticity, clearly remains in SAB/Miller's interest.

The jury is out, however, on whether viewers really 'buy' this beautiful and enticing *über-ad* or simply *allow* themselves to, being temporarily overwhelmed by the seductions of a curious (and enticing) virtual reality, which pretends to be better than reality itself, thereby putting the final nail in into the coffin of authenticity.

Whilst it creates an illusion of warmth and belonging, where 'glocal' is supposed to be even 'lekkerder', it leaves those growing masses that prefer the simple, unspun and real - out in the cold.

## ABOUT DR KAY BRÜGGE

Dr Kay Brügge is a life- design practitioner with post-graduate qualifications in psychology and neuro-psychology, specialising in qualitative research and project management, driving market and social research projects, including methodology development and focus group facilitation. With a PhD in neuro-psychology and special interest in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), he is interested in the analysis of subliminal messages in advertising and the subconscious influences of the retail environment on the consumer. He can be reached on email: [lifecoach@polka.co.za](mailto:lifecoach@polka.co.za).

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