

Bell Pottinger findings: ethics breached but 'white monopoly capital' not its creation

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UK PR Firm Bell Pottinger's account team working for the Gupta-owned Oakbay was primarily responsible for devising the strategy behind the economic emancipation campaign, known in SA as the "white monopoly capital" campaign.



This was according to the findings, released on Monday, by law firm Herbert Smith Freehills (HSF), which was asked to examine the work done by Bell Pottinger on the Oakbay account.

Bell Pottinger has released HSF's findings but not the full report.

"The BP [Bell Pottinger] account team was primarily responsible for devising the strategy behind the economic emancipation campaign, and for creating and commissioning content for the social media and press aspects of that campaign," HSF said in its findings.

"Certain material that we have seen that was created for the campaign was negative or targeted towards wealthy white South African individuals or corporates and/or was potentially racially divisive and/or potentially offensive and was created in breach of relevant ethical principles."

No evidence

However, it said there was no evidence to suggest that the PR firm used, or instructed others to use, so-called Twitterbots in the promotion of the campaign.

HSF said that a key part of the economic emancipation campaign was a social media and press campaign, which included one blog and one associated Twitter account.

It also found that there was no evidence that the Bell Pottinger team had invented the term "white monopoly capital",

although on occasion it had been used by them as part of the economic emancipation campaign.

"In addition, we have seen evidence that the BP account team used other tactics in relation to the economic emancipation campaign which arguably breached the relevant ethical principles, including taking steps which might mislead or undermine journalists who were asking questions in relation to the campaign," it said.

Source: Business Day

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