

Does branded content in the broadcast space work?

 By [Harriet Gavshon](#)

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There's no doubt about it, branded content is everywhere, in different shapes and forms. But does it achieve what it sets out to do? Quizzical Pictures, one of South Africa's production houses believes it does, provided that the brand proposition and the entertainment proposition are closely aligned.

From branded reality shows for aspiring young actors, to branded cooking and DIY/building shows, to branded fictional dramas and game shows, the likes of Fanta, T-Systems, Pond's and Sunlight are all turning to branded content to enhance their reach in a more personable, memorable and hopefully enlightening manner. And according to Forrester's latest report 'How to build your brand with branded content', when produced well, branded content is an effective tool indeed.

Bridging the gap

But for many of us, the same rule applies irrespective of how popular the gizmo may be: Is it able to give me the same return as my traditional TVC campaign? Understandably most marketers go for tried, tested and trusted marketing methods. But with audiences becoming increasingly bombarded with impressive products, better claims and seemingly indisputable benefits, consumers are viewing our traditional norms like advertising, PR or CRM with an ever-increasing jaded eye. Can we really trust what companies are saying?

The critical thing to remember when evaluating the merits of branded broadcast content is that it bridges the gap between a traditional TVC's emotive power and a PR campaign's ability to educate. When done well it not only entertains, but it educates your market, and by doing so, wins their interest and kinship. So not only are we tackling the trust factor, but also we are adding even greater value to your overall ATL campaign - it's a support tool.

A key example

To illustrate this, Quizzical Pictures was commissioned in 2012 and 2011 to produce the broadcast component of Amstel's branded content campaign, Class Act. With research indicating that their target audience would not be as receptive to a highly emotive Amstel TVC as its core markets were, it required Amstel's agency, OwenKessel and their partner Quizzical Pictures, to come up with an innovative use of mass media to engage interest. That's when AFP (Advertiser Funded Programming) was applied. Enter "Class Act - South Africa's Toughest Film Audition", a reality TV series broadcast on SABC1 primetime, which in its simplest form is Idols for promising actors.

The brief to Quizzical Pictures was to come up with a show that promoted the brand promise of Amstel at the time which was 'passion and commitment have their own reward'. The entire premise of Class Act was based on passion and

commitment, so the fit was perfect.

The results were impressive:

- It gained the highest viewership amongst its target audience - best viewed TV program in South Africa on Saturdays from March to June in the tier LSM 5-7
- It held a strong and consistent position in the top 20 of best watched SA TV programmes per week with peaks in the top 10 during 13 weeks of the TV programme; By the end of the show, 60% of Amstel's LSM 5-7 target audience had heard about Class Act. 40% had watched it, which is the highest rate by far of all social demographic groups
- It generated a strong liking for the show - 93% of a panel tested enjoyed the show; 68% thought Class Act is more enjoyable to watch than other TV shows, and 100% wanted a Class Act season 2
- It gained strong viewership involvement - 700, 000 SMS votes; 80, 000 website page visits; 120, 000 mobisite page visits and 9, 500 Facebook visits with 2, 750 loyal Facebook fans

From a brand equity point of view, the results were equally impressive:

- Of the panel tested, 82% mentioned Amstel as the key sponsor; 99% agreeing that Class Act was a real opportunity; 75% thought Amstel became more appealing because of Class Act.
- Ultimately Amstel was able to generate a constant presence and a very high AR level of 4, 200 ARs, which resulted in the # 1 SOV in the beer category for the period January - June 2010, amongst the LSM 5-7 market.

Becoming more innovative

What we always have to ask is: are we providing enough entertainment and are we marshalling the extraordinary power of storytelling to really engage your market with your brand? And is the story we are telling absolutely aligned with the story your brand is wanting to tell?

In 2003 the London-based Branded Content Marketing Association was formed which boasts a membership with representation in Europe, Australia, Asia and the US.

In January 2008 it conducted a study to illustrate branded content's effectiveness in relation to traditional advertising. One-third of people sampled were skeptical about traditional ads and only one-tenth trusted the companies producing the ads. The study concluded, "In the overwhelming majority of cases, consumers preferred the more innovative approach compared with traditional advertising".

Another BCMA study in 2008 highlighted how useful branded content has become in the age of technology. Over 95% of the time, websites that feature branded content were more successful than websites featuring typical advertisements, and 24% more effective at increasing the purchase intent of viewers.

ABOUT HARRIET GAVSHON

Harriet Gavshon is an award winning Managing Director for one of South Africa's leading film and television production companies - Quizzical Pictures. Her passion for the industry and commitment to telling rich, relevant stories through quality production saw Harriet winning the Woman of Courage and Vision Crystal Award from Women in Film in 1998. More recently she received an award from the Minister of Arts and Culture for being one of South Africa's premier female artists.

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