

The only campaign approach to GBV

 By [Jennilee Peremore-Oliver](#)

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The collective strides of individuals and organisations in South Africa have brought gender-based violence to the centre stage. It is good to see that private companies are following suit.



Photo by [Volkan Olmez](#) on [Unsplash](#).

However, in the past two years, I've also had to bite my tongue as I watched campaigns that don't do justice to South Africa's GBV crisis.

Media, marketing, and communications professionals can make a meaningful impact on the GBV crisis in this country because when they make a statement through the brands they represent, people listen, take note, and act. As advisors, we must ensure that private companies join the right conversation.



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A GBV campaign cannot be 'whipped up' at the last minute, as clients often request.

The stakes are high.

Countless women have died or continue to live in constant fear and agony, and their children endure horrid domestic circumstances. Mothers and fathers have lost their daughters; sons and daughters have lost their mothers.

If you plan a campaign for your company regarding GBV, I implore you to consider the following carefully:

1. Don't jump on the bandwagon

Be careful about jumping on the bandwagon of popular marketing campaigns.

Popular campaigns don't always go viral for the right reasons.

Virality does not equal success.

It could be that the organisation running the campaign has the resources to invest significantly in mainstream advertising. More generally, popular campaigns are easier for the public to accept than the actual horrific truth about GBV.

An example of jumping on the bandwagon was a recent [GBV campaign that was started in Turkey](#) to highlight the plight of Turkish women facing GBV. Women accepted the challenge by posting their black and white selfies on Instagram to communicate the urgent need to address the GBV crisis.

The campaign was quickly taken out of context when people turned it into a superficial campaign posting posed photos and comments about women empowerment. Once these people realised the campaign's real purpose, many opted to delete their photos from social media.

Don't let your brand be guilty of jumping on the bandwagon, and then you must backtrack.



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2. Do your research

When it comes to issues involving human rights, you should start your research with the [Constitution of South Africa](#). The laws published in the Constitution lists our human rights and how we should live with each other in harmony, with mutual respect.

However, there will always be people who will break the law, and that won't change. The criminal justice system is there to protect the rights of the innocent.

The problem with the South African justice system is that justice officials responsible for implementing the law, don't implement the law according to the Constitution. They don't let people who break the law deal with the consequences of their actions, and this is how femicide has developed into the crisis we are dealing with today. Perpetrators are protected.

No one wants to believe that SA justice officials are breaking the law and denying innocent South African citizens their right to justice. Therefore, when journalists research GBV stories and find gaps that don't make sense and their questions go unanswered by justice officials, they simply move onto the next story. Therefore, don't expect to find the full picture of GBV in mainstream news.

The only way to fill the gaps is to receive feedback from actual survivors of abuse who have experience with the justice system. There is very little primary research done with survivors due to the dangerous nature of GBV.

Should you complete this primary research, you'll find that women are not silent about abuse. Contrary to what the SA government has made the public believe, women seek help and are often refused or sent on a [wild goose chase by our public servants](#).

If you've completed a thorough research project on GBV before launching your campaign, then you should get a sinking and heavy feeling on your heart. That's how you'll know you're on the right track.

3. Choose a side

To do justice to the issue of GBV, you must choose a side. Which side will you choose?

Are you going to partner with the government and blame society? In that case, you will start a campaign that says, "speak out, don't be silent." Unfortunately, this campaign perpetuates [the government's message](#) that women are silent, which is untrue. [Women are not silent. They are silenced.](#) With a campaign like this, you might be able to convince people who don't understand GBV that you are making a difference, but it won't fool people who are knowledgeable of GBV.

If you choose the opposite side of this stance, then you side against the SA government and the criminal justice system. But in doing so, you risk making enemies in government.

If that is too bold or daring for your brand, you will opt for the third option, the safer choice, which focusses on toxic masculinity.



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Although toxic masculinity and cultural prejudices of female roles in society are part of the problem, it will require years to change attitudes and behaviours – and this kind of change won't happen now, [yet women are dying now](#). The South African Justice System can do something now to save women's lives [by convicting all perpetrators of GBV for crimes against women, not just for murders](#).

Conclusion

When it comes to GBV, [gimmicky campaigns that drive sales for your business](#) won't cut it. Women are dying.

Do your research, and the right kind of research will protect your brand from the backlash you could receive when people who understand GBV start pointing out how your campaign is not doing justice to women who face abuse.

The stories that GBV victims will tell you are horrific and painful. These stories will make you look differently at the South African Justice System as you learn about the role in this crisis.

If your brand is serious about making a difference regarding GBV, add your brand's voice to the GBV news reports.

Be brave and bold and take a stance against the SA government, the criminal justice system, and the South African Police service and [hold President Cyril Ramaphosa accountable](#).

Ask him the right questions and demand a response. If you care about your female clientele as you claim to, this will be the

focus of your GBV campaign.

There is only one right angle when it comes to GBV. Be part of the right conversation.

ABOUT JENNILEE PEREMORE-OLIVER

Jennilee Peremore-Oliver is an award-winning media and communications professional, who started her career in 2009. In 2017 she founded the Communications Agency, Jenniemore (Pty) Ltd. She has worked with brands in the corporate, media and non-profit sectors.

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