

Advertising? Let's get emotional

By [Natalie Botha](#), issued by [Kantar](#)

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South Africans love funny. Research proves we [appreciate humour in advertising](#) more than any other country in the world. This speaks to our resilient ability to roll with the punches, but are we becoming less funny? Are all the hard knocks taking a toll on how consumers connect to your advertising? Here's what the latest facial coding fortune cookie reveals for 2023...



What's the last ad you saw that made you LOL in real life and nudge your partner to drag their eyes away from their phone and join you in a moment of shared amusement?

For some, it was seeing how serious Sunday staple Derek Watts lite'ns up with Castle Lite, while others relished meeting 'Chakalaka Norris' – a character so spicy, he eats Nando's in a Savanna ad. Further laughs abound from learning how The Courier Guy handles your package. Even grudge purchases like insurance can have ads that grab attention, make you laugh and reconsider your options, like Budget Insurance's 'Don't Beeetch - Sweetetch'.

Humorous advertising works because it tickles the funny bone in a way that sticks as an easy anecdote to share, telling stories that are relatable to South Africans. But no matter how entertaining, enjoyable or evocative the ad, it only builds your brand if intuitively connected to the brand itself. If nobody recalls the brand, then the ad isn't doing its job. This is marketing

101 but will be crucial for creative effectiveness in the coming months.

[Kantar's Global Issues Barometer](#) tells us how the world (including SA) was feeling in their own words, revealing that it's essential to keep communicating uniqueness through ad creative. But who can tell your audience's state of mind in the untold future? We can.

Advertising in times of uncertainty

No matter how tough the times, there's always space for levity and joy. Our creative testing with Affectiva uses facial coding to show that smiles and overall ad scores have not changed dramatically during the pandemic, inflation, and the resulting cost-of-living crisis. So, brands need not panic. Instead, [carry on communicating your brand actions](#) through your advertising, especially where it adds value to people's lives. Add a sprinkle of sensitivity but beware of empathising your audience into a depressive state, as seen from the generic Covid-19 creative that blended into a bland haze of 'we're in this together' sadvertising.

Three hot trends to follow for creative effectiveness in 2023

The more things change, the more they stay the same – so the basic tenets of creating consistent quality creative, staying close to your audience, and being a positive force rather than turning to 'sadvertising' will likely still hold true in a decade's time...

1. Bring on the popcorn: Tell a great story

Chicken Licken's Wakanda-esque mini-movie by Joe Public did this beautifully. But you don't need to blow the budget on one ad. Just make sure it's easy to understand, single-minded in purpose and tells an engaging story clearly linked to the brand.

2. All the feels: Make them emotional

One of our [favourite ads this last festive season](#) was the Cadbury ad by Ogilvy South Africa, tapping into the SA story of people going home for the Christmas holidays. Humans are complex beings that feel first and think second, so emotionally engaging ads helps build memorable, lasting impressions.

3. Show me the funny

As we waited for life to buffer in 2022, we laughed at the accuracy of 'touch, pause... engage,' envisioned by TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris for MTN.

But is your funny the same as everyone else's funny? Avoid nasty surprises by testing before you go live, especially when repurposing what worked in traditional for digital – even then, humour styles vary from platform to platform, with TikTok's stance fast-moving and satirical while Meta's Facebook and Instagram audiences prefer the personal and YouTube lends to longer story-based skits.

TLDR? To really engage South African audiences, tell a great story and connect on an emotional level using humour to drive your story home. But remember Winston Churchill's advice: "A joke is a very serious thing." [Catch up on](#) the 5 creative sparks or common themes that set apart the most effective ads and get in touch to find out if what your brand finds funny, lands accurately with South African audiences, and determine where the smiles are strongest.

As you prepare for the year ahead, take a virtual walk down memory lane for a reminder of what Saffers like:



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