

# Let's celebrate brands that insult Africans

 By [Banele Rewo](#)

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When it comes to Africa, Africans and the African market everything marketing related should be implemented with a blanket approach. This is because Africans aspire to be anything but African, more specifically they yearn to buy into whiteness of western cultures.

In 2016, it's not shocking to young Africans when brands churn out racist campaigns that are conceived from attitudes like the above statement. We share, and alert each other through social media enough to get an apology. But there is something bigger moving against stubborn brands, they are falling apart and they don't know.

## No brand is too big to fall

**Old losers:** The Platinum Group; owners of Hilton Weiner, Aca Joe and Jenni Button were placed under liquidation this year. They cited the influx of global fashion retailers to the local market - including Zara and Cotton On - and local rivals, such as The Foschini Group and Woolworths' Country Road, eroding the relevance of the Platinum Group brands in recent years.

Who is the largest market for these rivals? Correct! Bernie Brookes vowed to bring back the glory days for Edgars. What he forgot is that the glory days were created by a protracted socio-economic system that relied on indebting South Africans through premium pricing on aspirational brands tied to credit. This created massive profits during the "glory days". Times are different now, more choices available to consumers.

**Old winners:** With the new South Africa and the rise of the a new middle class, Woolworths positioned itself as an aspirational brand to a generation that was for the first experiencing South Africa in a way they never knew was going to be possible. Yes, a generation that bought into the lily whiteness of Woolworths, this was after Woolworths realised that the white South African cannot sustain the business, only Africans can, a whole lot of Africans.

"Woolworths is also well placed to benefit from the growing population of higher income, LSM 8-10 South Africans. "We need to ensure that our proposition is aligned with an increasingly black customer base." Woolworths Holdings Limited Annual report 2014 .p. 27. Capitec, FNB, Hollard, MTN all owe their growth to appreciating Africans because it does not take a genius to remember where these brands are.

## So why should we celebrate brands that insult Africans?

**New losers:** The recent racist tweets by H&M did not shock young Africans. It generated a reaction; a conversation

between African youth on social media and condemnation was a consequence rather than the cause. It is typical of brands that aim to impose their "global" status with an expectation to profit automatically on the continent. They find that South Africa does not function in that fashion. Locally, Ballantine's whisky recently hosted an event in Walter Sisulu Square Kliptown, the centre accommodates a variety of sizes of events. The particular venue chosen by Ballantine's is the same as one used by a monthly premier event, "Unplugged", whose brand has grown over several years.

To date Unplugged commands attention of young people with very fluid pockets when it comes to spirits brand choices. Several premium brands affiliate with the event for a chance of wooing this market through the event without the hassle of trying to duplicate it. Entrance is R100 and everyone is VIP, premium bottles flow off the bar. The event is the most premium independent event in Soweto. Ballantine's and Mzansi Magic had a great concept connected to a live broadcast on TV and social media. Then it went downhill... booked the same venue as the most premium event, charge R100 entrance, then charge R625 for a bottle of Ballantine's, R25 for a single shot. No charge for VIP; which is where all the white people were.

The brand manager on site tells patrons who won VIP tickets on Inner Circle that there is no VIP. Patrons with VIP cannot access "GA" with a drink in hand in an environment that does not support physical separation of VIP and GA. This is despite the fact that the events hosted in the city and other northern spaces do not have such draconian rules and pricing, in fact everything is free until you bring it to the "black" market then monetary ROI is suddenly at the forefront of any idea. This shows that such brands are not willing to invest in the African market, but they seem to be forced to "go to that side of town" with substandard plans.

**New winners:** Cassper Nyovest demonstrated through "Fill Up The Dome" how young South African are rallying behind their own brands without being hooked with international brands. He proved just how arrogant and skeptical the media is of concepts and entities created by Africans when hardly a mention was seen pre and post the event. No artist has exposed corporate SA's often racist double-standard sponsorship of their return on investment BS like Cassper did.

The most important winners are the entrepreneurs and individuals who have converted rejected ideas on how to market to Africans into clothing brands, events and services which are offered to Africans who need them and get them they way want them. This is locking in the crucial rand, opens skills transfer opportunities within our environment and slowly eliminates poor value brands. This would not happen if brands did not force us to create our solutions and therefore rendering them useless year after year. For that reason we should celebrate these brands.

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