

Brand-enabled content: getting past the PVR

By [Angela Ferreira](#), issued by [Havas Johannesburg](#)

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So the PVR is making it harder and harder for marketers to get consumers' attention? It's time for marketers to do the unexpected to win back people's attention. Angela Ferreira, Euro RSCG's planning director, looks at how using brand-enabled content can help a brand stand out from the crowd.



The days of the captive TV audience are so long gone, that it takes serious mental effort to even access the memory. First tapes (also a vague memory), and then DVDs and HDD recorders bought viewers a couple of hours of viewing uninterrupted by commercials. Add to this the bouquet channel offerings whose wide choice got people channel-hopping faster and more regularly than ever, when not glued to their mobile, mailing, "facebooking" or surfing online. And then the final blow: enter PVR. Now viewers don't even have to screen unwanted content and messaging, they can avoid it completely.

As marketers, this is an unnerving state of affairs. But there is a way around it. Have you noticed how on one hand, people are going to great lengths to screen out content, while on the other, the active search for, viewing and unprompted sharing of content has never been higher?

The obvious explanation for this is that viewers are more resistant to commercial content than user-generated content. But this isn't strictly true. It's more a case of their being resistant to content which has no stand-out appeal. If commercial content achieves stand-out appeal, it has as good a chance of going viral as Susan Boyle's remarkable debut on *Britain's Got Talent*.

Several recent examples prove this theory. Take Vodacom's "All the single ladies" and "Player 23" commercials. Both afford enough of a chuckle to get viewed and passed on. Durex "Balloon Animals" is another one I have received many times. Even a small operation called Floyd's 99 Barbershop in Fourways Crossing made the e-mail rounds recently. Evidently, the common success factor here is engagement value.

If you want consumers to view, talk about and spontaneously interact with your brand, you need to give them something worthy of sharing. And this does not mean you need to be funny. The majority of commercially-generated content relies on humour to up consumer interest stakes. It's a sure bet in the South African market, but in general, it actually lacks stand-out appeal. Just think about what you have viewed and passed on lately. Only a small portion of user-generated content that is consumed and disseminated is funny. The rest is silly, gross, cute, scary, unexpected, clever or just plain weird.

A great example of a brand which did it "unexpectedly" is T-Mobile, which staged a "dance flash mob" at Liverpool Street Station. Admittedly, flash mobs have been around for awhile, but this staged impromptu production has been viewed a total of 14- million times on You Tube alone since its posting on 15 January this year. And this excludes its viral e-mail circulation...

Another point to consider is that while decades of TV commercial production have trained us to pursue glossy perfection, but a cursory gloss of Zoopy or YouTube is all that's needed to demonstrate that consumers care far less about production quality than the value of the content itself. This is not to say that production quality should be hoofed out the window, just that painstaking crafting may win awards but is not enough to win consumers attention.

Marketers need to move on from brand-oriented messaging that talks at consumers, and instead focus on engaging consumers by producing interesting content with stand out appeal, content in which the brand is the enabler and, not necessarily the hero.

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Angela Ferreira is Euro RSCG's planning director.

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