

How passionate purpose can forge powerful connections: An analysis of 'Avocado Advocacy'



11 AUG 2023 SAVE | EMAIL | PRINT | PDF



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We open on a quiet suburban street. The dull thud of soles on tarmac draws our attention towards the runner at the top of the picture. As the inspirational music fades in, decades of iconic advertising from the likes of Nike, Adidas or Under Armour is conjured in our mind's eye. And then you see it. This is no ordinary runner, because he is dressed, from head to toe, as an avocado.

Nedbank's new content piece, titled #Run4Avos, aims at raising awareness of the Nedbank owned 'Avo SuperShop' and its benefits for runners. It sets out to achieve this by asking South Africa's massive running community to identify with the mockumentary style film's lead character: A charmingly misinformed yet well-intended individual named Jerry, desperate to use his passion for running to better the world around him.



As we progress through the film, the unfortunate Jerry explains his trials and tribulations in attempting to find a cause he can genuinely impact through his running, dubbing his new-found, ill-informed, aim to save avocados, 'avocacy.'

In 2023 a consumer is, more than ever, looking for a brand to prove that we (consumers) can trust them. The most effective way of achieving trust is through authenticity. We are no longer looking for a promise of how a sparkly product or service may change our lives. Rather, we want to know that the brand offering said product or service understands us, our needs and even our values.

"You must run to change the world, make an impact, run to save something. One step at a time, one cause at a time, one chafe cream at a time," claims Jerry. A claim that (barring chafe cream) will ring in the ears of marketers and runners alike.



Over the past decade, the go-to for brands looking to showcase authenticity in the promises they make has become purpose-led marketing. The basic principle: tying yourself to a cause which mirrors the core values of your brand in order to connect with your audience base.

Purpose-led marketing can be immensely powerful but also has slippery slope potential. Audiences are no longer fooled by brands creating 'campaigns' around causes as an illustration of support (see Bud Lite X Dylan Mulvaney). The expectation is that if you are going to claim to support a cause, that support has to be real, deep and make a meaningful impact. Nedbank has historically understood this, consistently using its Affinities Programmes and money education initiatives to uplift communities over the long-term.

Trust, connection and authenticity doesn't however, hinge solely on 'purpose' as many marketers understand it. Show your audience that you are in tune with their needs, how they think or what they feel and the same (or arguably an even deeper) connection can be forged.

While explaining his mission to run for Avos, Jerry asks the audience if they are aware that Avos can't speak for themselves – because, obviously, they can't speak! Don't be fooled, there is wisdom to be found here.

Don't put your customer in a position where they can't speak. Let them find a voice within your content. Create a meaningful conversation rather than pushing content at them. Then you'll achieve connection. How do you do this?

Talk to them about something they actually want to talk about. A real, informed conversation adding to something they have a passion for will cut through and grab attention.

"I've run for many things, I've run for Rhinos, run for hope, vitality, cities, parks even."

What runner can't identify with this? That is the key to Jerry and his story. #Run4Avos aims at grabbing attention through the target audience's passion for running. It then challenges the audience to see themselves in Jerry and ultimately laugh at themselves as a result – forging a connection with Jerry and ultimately, Nedbank / Avo SuperShop.

Show your target audience that you understand their passion, then use this to illicit an emotional response. You'll forge an immediate connection.

So, however good your intentions may be, don't be a Jerry.

Don't fall into the trap of performative purpose by putting on a show for your consumers around causes or consumer passions/interests that you don't genuinely believe in or can't authentically work into a relevant brand conversation.

Exercise passionate purpose. Be authentic in the way you converse with your audience. Show them that you really care about the same things they do and that you understand them as a result.

Passionate purpose will then open the door to authenticity, authenticity breeds trust and trust forges connection.

ABOUT ROB GARDEN

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