

# It's time to discard the advertising formula aimed at Black South Africans

By [Thule Ngcese](#)

12 May 2022

I had gone back home for the December holidays in the Eastern Cape. And while there, a long way from my place of work in Johannesburg, I spent quality time with my family and caught up with friends I hadn't seen in a while because of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions.



Thule Ngcese, creative director at Boontown n

I had missed home and everything else familiar to me. The evolution spurred on by the pandemic had changed the world in just over a year and sitting with these people I know well, and love much, made me realise that the ad world and the research that informs it had not.

“Single Black female. Age 30-45. Has two kids. Lives with her mother and her mother’s mother in a two-bedroom house. Works 9 to 5. Money is tight. Shops for specials. Internet is limited.” How many times had I heard that pre-pandemic, and was still hearing that post-pandemic?

It was supper time – around 7pm - in the dining room watching my aunt’s favourite TV programmes like eNCA Extra, SABC News and Newzroom Afrika. And then *Moja Love* – when the 30-second commercial that really brought it home was flighted during one of the ad breaks.

## Are we sticking to cliches?

I think the bad music gave it away. This ad was full of cliches about Black people. It followed the story of a single Black mother who struggles to cook something that’s easy and ‘tasty’ after work for her family. She then seeks advice from her neighbour who has a solution for her which she happens to be holding right there.

Imagine walking around with a can of something and telling your neighbours in the 'hood' how great tasting it is? Nah. We need to cancel that 'makhe' did you know (insert product USP)?' narrative. Just saying.

Anyway, the ad ends off with the mother taking the advice to prepare dinner and we see them seated around a dinner table enjoying the delicious meal together with 'wonke umntu eveze elokugqibela' (everyone having a good laugh). I think there might have been a terrible joke thrown in there as well.

My aunt turned to me – even though she is not sure what exactly a creative director does but the word 'director' is an important title bestowed on a person who should have the answers to all of her advertising questions - she asked: Why?



## How to use brand storytelling to engage your audience

Xneelo 8 Mar 2022



## Where's the real narrative?

I answered the best way I could. But she wasn't convinced. She couldn't understand why the ad wasn't true in reflecting our lives. Soon, the conversation expanded to questioning why most TV ads targeting Black people are the same. Why is there a formula?

She's 100% right. Why are we not telling our real locally relevant stories? What value are clients getting from these agencies? Are there no other locally relevant stories besides a single Black mother who is a nurse who comes home after a long day at work and the kids are hungry so she prepares a quick to prepare a meal?

As a Black person, I can think of plenty.

Importantly, one of the key reasons for us being stuck in the loop we are in is that there isn't enough Black talent with a voice at advertising agencies. And those with voices are in it for themselves. I repeat, in it for themselves. With no foresight of developing our industry, together.

It is a narrative that has been around for decades – that being BEE compliant isn't enough for ad agencies. Honestly, there have been some progressive shifts, but the time is now for a new formula or equation. Here it is: 'Betha umzimba intloko izakuziwela' – attack the body and the head will fall by itself.

In an advertising context, the more we build each other (Black and White) and produce work that is reflective of us South Africans, the more consumers can relate, that brand empathy will convert to sales, and more international brands will invest in our beautiful 'cowntry', and that investment will lead to job creation.

Simple.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thule Ngcese is the creative director at Boortown

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>