

SpringBox: A marketing triumph for Eskort and Metropolitan

It is 12 August 2023 - the day the Springboks leave South Africa for the Rugby World Cup. Fans are waiting at OR Tambo airport to support the Golden Boys and bid them *adieu*.



The Springbox ad outside OR Tambo. Source: Supplied.

As the bus approaches the last overhead gantry before entering the airport, an advertising billboard reads *Go Springbox* - a message of support from Eskort - a South African pork brand. The message is well-received until everyone realises that 'Springboks' has been misspelt as 'SpringBox'.

Frenzy

It didn't take long for the billboard to cause a frenzy. The media caught wind of the epic faux pas, and social media was abuzz with questions about whether someone at Eskort would undoubtedly be fired.

The 'corporate blunder' was on everyone's radar, and conversation around the Eskort 'SpringBox' billboard captured the attention of South Africans, with one word in mind – 'Embarrassing'.

"How could a brand like Eskort make such a mistake?", the public asked. "Unless it wasn't?". Alternative theories started suggesting that this was possibly another ingenious ruse by Eskort, which will open the door for an engaging campaign that

will follow.

They were right. The billboard marked the beginning of what would become an engaging and successful campaigns for the brand.



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Dr Kuhle Zwakala 13 Nov 2023



Every year, Eskort briefs its advertising agency MetropolitanRepublic to announce the beginning of the braai season with a spring campaign. This year was no different, but it was slightly more special - the campaign would be underscored by a 'once-in-four-years' opportunity - the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

And while Eskort's braai products would be sizzling over many fires during the World Cup rugby games, the company didn't have pockets deep enough to buy a seat at the very expensive sponsorship table.

So instead, they started a different conversation and created a product for rugby-crazy, braai-loving locals and fans - a cooler box for Spring that customers could keep their braai goodies in, which was aptly named The SpringBox.

Legal battle

The 'Go SpringBox' billboard at OR Tambo, which the country misconstrued for a spelling error, was set up to reveal the cooler box, as explained a few days later with a hilarious TVC ad starring Frikkie, who explained what Eskort meant by 'SpringBox', and that the billboard the launch for this limited-edition cooler box.

The original billboard was taken down and replaced with one that showed a picture of the SpringBox with a line reading: 'More than a cooler box, it's a SpringBox'. The TVC ad was released during the Springboks vs All Blacks match on 25 August, triggering a wave of humorous reactions from the public that would last for days after.

Eskort was the joke hero of the year, with the country laughing at themselves for riding on the bandwagon.

The reveal lent itself to more hilarious SpringBox content and pushed the consumer demand for the cooler box through the roof, so much so that one of South Africa's biggest retailers contacted Eskort to supply them with the SpringBox to stock in-store due to the demand.



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The Springbox reveal during the Springboks vs All Blacks' nail-biting match outperformed some sponsor brands. The joke took a turn, as it struck a nerve with SA Rugby.

Eskort was served with a cease-and-desist letter, and a legal battle ensued for weeks. But in the background, the campaign gained more traction. Eskort and MetropolitanRepublic adapted the content, accordingly, producing work that would keep the campaign alive creatively.

The legal battle sparked great interest with many legal practitioners weighing in on the conversation. A prominent business school even asked to do a marketing case study on the campaign.

By the time Eskort and Metro no longer had any legal wiggle room, the campaign had run its course and Eskort had effectively owned a conversation that they didn't have pockets deep enough to be a part of.

"The success of this campaign really came down to the trust between Metro and the Eskort team. It's rare and we as Metro consider ourselves lucky to have a client that values brave creative work as much as we do" said Kamogelo Sasing, executive creative director of MetropolitanRepublic.

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