

CEO of Gorilla Creative Media Jordan Wallace on The Huletts National Humthem and celebrating SA pride

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This month's Marketing Mastermind is Jordan Wallace, CEO of Gorilla Creative Media. He discusses The Huletts National Humthem.



Jordan Wallace, CEO of Gorilla Creative Media

How did this idea come about?

When we pitched for the account in February 2020, the brief we were given was to position Huletts as a proudly South African brand. At the time, Huletts was facing stiff opposition from cheaper, imported brands and had recently formalised a partnership with Proudly South African. They wanted a campaign that celebrated that partnership.

Singing plays a huge role in how South African's celebrate their heritage and we proposed bringing Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika to life in a new and engaging way. The brand team loved our idea and we won the account.

But in March, Covid changed everything. With everyone in lockdown and new regulations in place around mask-wearing and social distancing, it didn't feel appropriate to continue with the campaign as planned, and we went back to the drawing board.

Even though the country was in hard lockdown, we observed that the majority of the Hulett workforce, as essential workers, were getting on with business. They were all wearing masks and keeping socially-distanced which we recognized as an act of Proud South African patriotism in itself.

Everyone still loved the idea of singing to celebrate our Proudly South African heritage but have you even tried singing in a mask? It's impossible. That's when the idea formed. Masks may muffle our voices, but they would never stop us from celebrating our South African pride. We may not have been able to sing like we planned, but we could still show our pride. Not with a song, but with a hum.

The Huletts National Humthem was born. It's a full-length film featuring Huletts workers out in the fields, humming the tune of the national anthem, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, while working.

Why was there a need for a solution like The Humthem?

When the country went into hard lockdown, we noticed that other brands were putting out these generic, “we’ll get through this” type adverts. We knew that we had to acknowledge Covid and the situation we were in, but we wanted to do it in a way that held true to Hulett’s brand position ‘A little sweetness goes a long way’. Even though times were tough, we wanted to spread a little joy and make people smile and I believe this campaign managed to do that.



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Tell us about your campaign approach.

We shot the film on one of Hulett's' sugar farms. We posted the full-length film – our hero asset – on Facebook and YouTube. Once that landed, we launched a 30-second TV commercial that we ran on SABC.

As we approached Heritage Month, we broke down the hero asset into smaller cut-downs for social media. We posted six- and 15-second versions of the Humthem on Facebook and Instagram. In the lead-up to Heritage Day, we put out a call to action on these platforms inviting South Africans to share their versions of the Humthem, with a chance to win a cash prize. South Africans could submit their entries via social media.

We released the final version of The Hulett's National Humthem on Heritage Day 2020, featuring Hulett's workers, influencers, and ordinary South Africans, as a way to thank everyone for joining in.



Although masks may muffle our voices, they won't dampen our pride.
While we cannot sing the song of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, its melody beats loudly in us all.
We called for fellow South Africans to join us as we celebrate our South African heritage.
Not with a song, but with a hum - the Hulett's National Humthem.

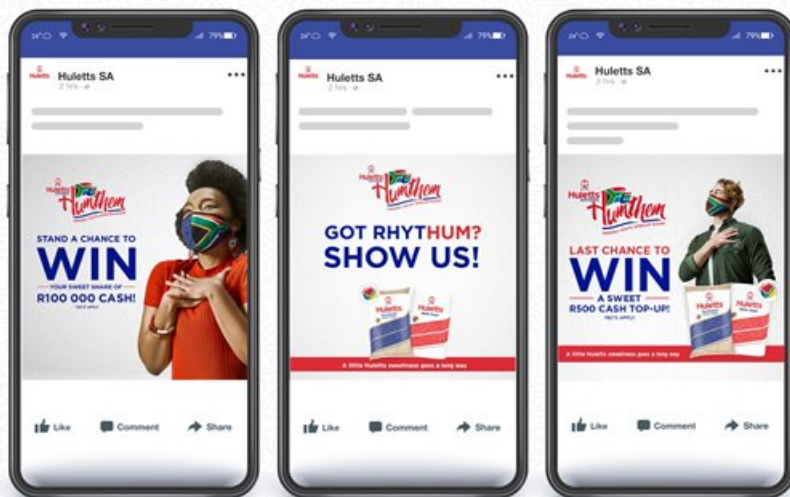


And what were the results?

This campaign generated great awareness, and the results were astounding:

- We received 3,255 Humthem submissions from South Africans.
- That's nearly 27 hours of humming.
- Brand sentiment improved 60% during the campaign, with 18% more respondents choosing Hulett's as their preferred sugar brand after the campaign.
- Hulett's' market share increased 4% year on year.
- There was a 43% engagement rate on Facebook through unique reach of just under five million and around 11 million impressions – 25% ahead of our KPIs for the campaign.
- We recorded 2.2 million engagements on Facebook over the six-week campaign, 780% ahead of our KPI of 225,000.
- There were four million impressions on Instagram and 800,000 engagements – 200% above target.
- The videos received 3.7 million impressions across Facebook and YouTube.

We invited South Africans to share their Humthems



Were there any unexpected results?

We entered the campaign into the Smarties and won Gold in the 2021 Mobile Video Category.

Do you have a stand-out memory from this campaign?

It was so nice to see the level of engagement from South Africans. We received videos from teachers of their entire classes humming The Humthem. We had families doing it. There was a real sense of pride and acknowledgement that we were all going through tough times, but we're still proudly South African. It was just a lovely, feel-good campaign.



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Did you experience any challenges rolling out this campaign?

The challenges mostly came with filming during lockdown. We had to get travel and professional permits for everyone that would be on set. Because of social distancing, we had a smaller crew than usual, and most footage was shot outside.

Do you have advice for other companies considering a similar campaign?

Stay flexible with your ideas. Sometimes we fall in love with ideas, and then we stop thinking outside the box. Covid changed the context of everything – it didn't matter how great the original idea was or could have been. We had to be sensitive to what people were going through. People were losing jobs, getting sick, stuck in lockdown, businesses were under pressure. It just wasn't the right time for the original idea. So, for us as an agency, it's essential to stay flexible, not die by our ideas, and adapt when the situation calls for it.

What was your biggest learning?

The importance of building an honest and transparent relationship with the brand team so that you can raise concerns and work through challenges together.

Also, if you have strong beliefs about something and you're confident it could work, push for it; have the dialogue. It was a hard concept to sell without actually going out and shooting it. Thankfully, Huletts had the courage to trust us. We worked with a great production team and just went off and did it.

Will you be expanding the campaign?

Yes. We're shooting a follow-up commercial. It won't be The Humthem, but it will still be out in the field – just bigger, better, and very proudly South African.

How can people get in touch?

Absolutely. Say hi at hello@gorillacreativemedia.com

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