

TV series sponsorship: Think out of the box

 By [Bonnie Ramaila](#)

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I have often wondered why TV airtime sales raised sponsorship for the duration of the series' season, and why companies buy into it. At the same time, I have never understood why companies should have those closing and opening billboards before, during and after the programme, until I saw 1st for Women sponsoring the M-Net series 'Revenge'. Yes, I have DStv now and I am progressing within LSM, moving from LSM 4 to LSM 5 - that's when my education on the use of such sponsorships started.

Even though I am difficult to please, I have to commend 1st for Women for this particular sponsorship. Not only is it the right fit with the episodes that run weekly, but I have also been educated on what 1st for Women covers and does not cover.

It must have been a painstaking exercise for the creative guys who had to sit through all the episodes of 'Revenge', and therefore had to listen to every word said, tone used, action that happened and analyse every scene. But I must say it paid off. It is brilliant and spot on. This is what needs to happen when creatives put their hearts and minds to a job.

1st for Women have, in my opinion, set a great example of how a sponsorship for a TV series has to be done. For example, on one of the episodes of 'Revenge', Daniel Grayson bought a R1-million bottle of champagne at an auction - in the commercial break the 1st for Women ad was apposite to its trademark pay-off line with the message of *'why we don't insure men'*. This was based on what had just transpired in the episode, and at the same time, communicating the benefits of being covered by 1st for Women.

I think this is a brilliant opportunity that the company is using to communicate all the benefits of its short-term insurance as well as the fine print details. I learnt a lot about the insurance company's ethos.

1st for Women vs Samsung

By comparing 1st for Women's sponsorship of 'Revenge' to Samsung's sponsorship of 'Good Wife' makes it clear to me that Samsung has missed the point.

Firstly, I don't even think Samsung's products have any nexus to the various aspects taking place in the episodes of 'Good Wife' - needless to say, the misfit of law and electronics in this instance.

On an episode a few weeks ago, Peter Florrick's political campaign was never featured and the advert aired during the commercial break was an air-conditioner product with a voice-over that went something like this: *'If only our politicians*

were as efficient as our air-conditioners...' I had absolutely no idea which political aspect of the episode it was referring to...

Samsung's sponsorship for this series is a waste of time, money and creative effort, and a disastrous misfit. If the company was that desperate to take up the sponsorship, it should at least have looked into other areas of its product offerings. For example, legalities around using Samsung's products, the guarantee in terms of replacements or exchanges - which I'm sure have legal implications with big companies it supplies its products to. It would have made sense to communicate those benefits or create awareness around it, as opposed to showing off products that were unrelated to the storyline. It would have even been better if this series was sold to a legal firm, wherein it could use the series sponsorship to promote the type of services it delivers or what it offers to individual clients and companies - drawing from the storyline of the episodes that would be featured that week.

A good opportunity

This type of sponsorship is a good opportunity for companies to really communicate to their consumers and clients on the benefits of their services or products. It also gives them an opportunity to communicate those fine print rules and regulations that are binding and are seldom communicated when a deal is clinched.

It is much better than running magazine or newspaper ads, which would cost more in the long run on a continuous basis, as opposed to TV ads which are pretty pricey, but which offers an entertaining visual depiction of the offering that could be relevant and resonate with a consumer on a long-term basis.

For now, 1st for Women has set bar and a good example on the effective usage of sponsorship for a TV series. Agencies should start thinking out of the box in terms of sponsorship of client's products and services to enhance consumer's knowledge.

It will be interesting to see how the sponsorship for 'The Fixer' is going to be packaged... I am waiting with bated breath.

ABOUT BONNIE RAMAILA

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