

Scottish IPA

Institute of Practitioners in Advertising

James Boyle
Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
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13 OCT 2004

12 October 2004

Dear James

SCOTTISH IPA'S RESPONSE TO THE CULTURAL COMMISSION

I am writing on behalf of the Scottish IPA in response to your letter inviting input to the Cultural Commission. I am sorry it is late, but I hope there is still time to input our comments into your deliberations.

The Scottish IPA represents 18 Scottish based advertising and marketing agencies, with a combined staff in excess of 700 and a combined turnover of over £300 million.

We see ourselves as part of the 'creative industries' in Scotland. Although our goals as an industry are entirely commercial, we are aware that advertising's contribution to society has a significant cultural impact. Advertising and art are comfortable partners; from Andy Warhol's soup tins to Alan Parker's Hovis commercial and Charles Saatchi's modern art collection. The advertising industry and the world of art and culture often coincide. Therefore we feel that Scotland's advertising and marketing industry has a lot to offer our cultural scene.

However, we have many concerns about the overall health of our industry in Scotland. Many of our members are finding trading conditions very difficult, several companies have recently gone into liquidation, anecdotal evidence points to a shrinking talent pool (we are increasingly having to recruit from England), and large Scottish advertisers now look to London for advertising services.

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Indeed we are so concerned that we have initiated an industry study into the competitiveness of the marketing communications industry in Scotland. This has been backed by individual Scottish agencies, the Scottish IPA, the IPA in London, the Direct Marketing Association in Scotland, the Marketing Society in Scotland, SMG and Scotsman Publications. Scottish Enterprise are managing this for us and also part funding it. We expect a report early in 2005 and hope that this can be a catalyst to kick-start our industry and move it up the economic agenda.

One example of the difficulties we face is that no Scottish University or College currently has a post graduate vocational course in advertising; focusing on the creative side. Hence, there is little new Scottish creative talent coming into our industry. (Which is a shame given that David Ogilvy was a Scot, and Scottish creative talent advertising was much in evidence in the 1980's and 1990's.) We almost succeeded in backing and supporting a one-year postgraduate course at Napier, however this was pulled at the last minute by the University, much to our disappointment.

In direct response to your letter I think we can comment on two specific areas:

Education: How do we develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge?

All we would ask is that 'creative' skills are broadly interpreted to include commercial applications like advertising, graphic design, computer design and copywriting. We feel the need for greater advertising and marketing communications creativity in Scotland. Our belief is that it is important for the economy and also helps define our culture and sense of who we are. Brands like Irn Bru, Baxters, Tunnocks, Famous Grouse and Tennents are very much part of a Scottish identity, and the expression of these brands through advertising reflects both our culture and identity. For example, the s1jobs.com 'Ice cream' TV commercial was recently voted Scotland's Favourite Ad by readers of the Sunday Mail. This type of creativity could only ever come from Scotland.

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Marketing and promotion: How to increase and broaden the profile of the audience and the public engaging with cultural activity in Scotland?

Our view is that this boils down to two issues; physical access and marketing promotion.

Given that the bulk of cultural activity in Scotland happens in the central belt, and that the majority of the population live within the central belt, it is difficult to argue that physical access is a problem. However schemes such as Scottish Screen's mobile cinema, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra's touring programme, clearly add to the accessibility of the arts.

I personally have considerable experience of marketing the arts in Scotland, having worked for National Galleries of Scotland, Historic Scotland, Scottish Opera, Festival Theatre, King's Theatre, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Museum of Scotland. The common theme in relation to marketing is simply a lack of funds to get the message across. All these organisations struggle massively to compete in media coverage; especially when one considers that there is an ever increasing range of competitive options that hardly existed 20 years ago: restaurants, pubs, computer games, TV channels, video stores and the internet. Without proper budgets for promotions, the arts will always struggle to promote themselves successfully. Indeed much of the activity is done on a charitable basis, where marketing agencies, printers, designers etc. work for non-commercial rates.

One key aspect of promoting the arts is to use marketing and advertising to change public attitudes, or at least to challenge the pre-conceptions that many Scots have about the arts. This can be done, and in many cases has been successful, however as ever it requires significant promotional budgets to be effective.

Another related issue is that in attempting to change perceptions we often find that the rather elitist and 'stuffy' attitudes from some quarters in the arts in Scotland can be a problem. Such attitudes can be a barrier for marketing people who are aiming to reach out to the public through innovative communications, trying to create a 'bridge' to the arts. However we do find that clients are increasingly prepared to be more adventurous as the challenges become greater.

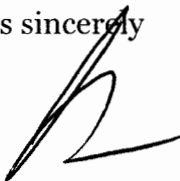
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I hope that this input is helpful. The Scottish IPA would be keen to help the Cultural Commission further if you required any specific help. We are passionate about advertising and marketing's contribution to the fabric of Scottish life and are keen that we continue to play a key role in the broader artistic and cultural mix.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'I. McAteer', written over the text 'Yours sincerely'.

Ian McAteer
Chairman, Scottish IPA