

Tastefully celebrating holidays and events: how brands can get it right

By  Marc de la Querra

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With Heritage Day on the horizon, consumers can expect to see two things in brands' social media and content around 24 September. The first is a back-patting post on company diversity. The other is a fluffy "Happy Braai Day" message.



Image credit: Mpumelelo Macu on Unsplash.

There is nothing fundamentally wrong with posting a picture of your staff enjoying a freshly braaied boerewors roll, especially on a more light-hearted platform like Instagram. This is particularly true if you're using social content to entice prospective employees by highlighting your company culture.



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However, if you're trying to incite discussion or engagement, this is the wrong way to go about it. Too often, these posts feel insincere or artificial and can do more bad to brand reputation than good.

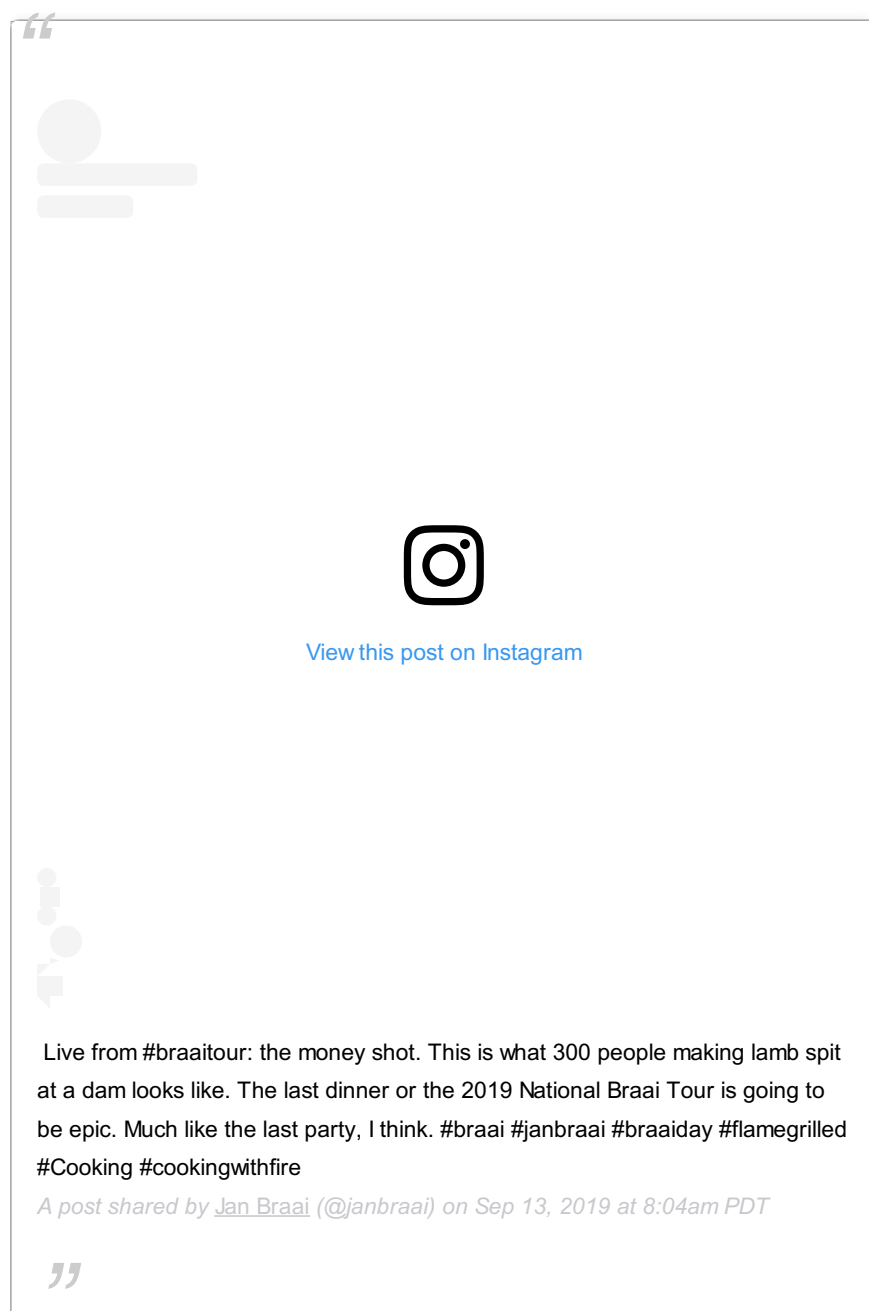
Don't post for the sake of posting

The problem is that too often, regardless of relevance, brands try to force an association with a topical holiday or calendar event just to have something to talk about on social media.

Instead, companies and their agencies should be asking themselves three questions:

1. Do my brand characteristics align with the holiday?
2. What will the company gain by joining in the conversation?
3. What will we lose if we don't participate?

With its focus on cultural diversity and pride, Heritage Day is a particularly sensitive occasion, and social posts risk provoking prickly keyboard warriors on Twitter and Facebook.



Given this emotionally charged context, the risk is far greater, posting an insincere post than posting nothing at all. If you're in doubt, stay out of the conversation.

Alternatively, pair your post with information pertinent to your customers. For example, your Happy Holidays message at the end of the year can be more than well-wishing attached to a festive stock image. Include notification of changed office hours for the period.



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Walk the talk; prove that you're a conscious company

Where posting on notable days works is when a company's real-world actions align with the occasion and do so consistently throughout the year.

For example, Exxaro Resources' Women in Mining initiative is an "always-on" project, uplifting women in a traditionally male-dominated industry. Efforts are communicated year-round across social and media channels, creating consistency on a conversation that makes messaging on Women's Day a natural fit for the brand.

“ We're continually working towards ensuring a better environment and work culture for our female employees to empower and celebrate women working in a male-dominated industry. [#Mining #Exxaro #WomenInMining #PoweringPossibility pic.twitter.com/oE55YVy1sg](#)— Exxaro (@ExxaroResources) [22 February 2019](#) ”

Again, the communications aren't hollow platitudes – they spotlight what Exxaro has done.

It can't be stressed enough: authenticity is key. People will look into what you say you do. A company can't hop on a holiday bandwagon, talk about a topic for only one day and expect to be taken seriously.



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Ultimately, brands shouldn't feel compelled to tap into every single notable occasion. Such communications typically blend into the noise of the day, with everyone doing the same thing.

Simply focus on what aligns with your company. And make sure what you have to say feels genuine as opposed to forced.

ABOUT MARC DE LA QUERRA

Marc de la Querra is a multi-award winning Creative and Business Unit Director at communications agency Clockwork in Johannesburg South Africa. He has lead various teams to create outstanding content for Netflix, Microsoft, E! Entertainment, LG, Microsoft, Comedy Central, Standard Bank and Jagermeister among others.

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