

A look from the opposite side of the field:

HOW BRAZILIAN BRANDS REACTED TO THE GERMANY X BRAZIL UNPRECEDENTED LOSS

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By Lara Oliveira

Despite the 107 Lions won at the Cannes Festival of Creativity this year, Brazilian agencies and brands experienced an unexpected disaster involving their beloved national soccer team during the World Cup 2014 tournament. The team's devastating and unimaginable 7-1 loss against Germany not only left fans speechless, but also silenced Brazilian brands, who were criticized for their lack of vision and speed of response. With considerable funds spent to address different outcomes, there still wasn't enough perspective to address *every* possibility.

Soccer is the glue of Brazilian society and any brand that sponsors the sport catches the attention of 200 million people. Following common practice, different versions of advertisements were created by brands that would appeal to Brazilian consumers, regardless of the national team's performance. Alternate spots were also created in case of escalating anti-government protests during the games, given the political unrest in Brazil in 2014. However, there wasn't a single piece of work that aired in response to the despair and anguish Brazilians felt on July 8, 2014. Even the "creative newsroom," a highly effective model recently implemented by some of the Brazilian brands, seemed to be as confused as the Brazilian players on the field.

Reinaldo Azevedo, a well-regarded Brazilian journalist and blogger for the popular *Veja* magazine, described the surreal feeling of watching TV commercials at half time (with the Germans winning 5-0). These spots celebrated the national team with campaign themes such as **Mostra tua força, Brasil** ("Show Your Strength, Brazil") from Itaú, one of Brazil's largest banks. It was only one day later that the advertisement was substituted by a generic promotional spot by the bank.

One of the most talked about campaigns was from Sadia, a major food producer and the official sponsor of the national team. Sadia rolled out the **#JogaPraMim** ("Play For Me") campaign, and the commercial featured kids between eight and 10 years old, asking the national team to play for *them*; these children had never experienced a World Cup win by

their home team. It's no surprise that this campaign irritated an already melancholic mood. The **#JogaPraMim** campaign received a strong response from consumers who responded online with clever comebacks and protests to Sadia. Sadia waited over 48 hours to react and switched to a new theme: **#EstamosJuntinhos** ("We're All Together"), with a more fitting and safer adult voice-over throughout the spot.



Sadia's #JogaPraMim campaign included online, print and TV.



On Twitter, Brazilian fans ask the German team to play for them instead of the national team.

Casas Bahia, a privately held retail chain that specializes in furniture and home appliances, also received considerable backlash. Before the World Cup, the chain promised consumers who bought TVs from their store an additional, brand new TV for R\$1 (approximately 50¢) if Brazil won the tournament. Social media exploded with parodies that the chain had planned to rig the World Cup to avoid fulfilling its promise. Casas Bahia has not responded to the allegations.



Brazilian fans posts content on Facebook and Twitter:

(left) Owner of Sadia and characters from the campaign making fun of their customers.

(center) "Did you really think you would buy another TV for R\$1?"

(right) "We thank the German team!!! TV for R\$1 – not in a million years!"

Even the **#WeAreAllMonkeys** campaign against racism starring Neymar (the upcoming star of the Brazilian team), which won a Gold Lion in the Promo category and a Silver Lion in the PR category at the 2014 Cannes Festival, wasn't spared. Consumers quickly charged the campaign's hash-tag to reflect their frustration: **#WeAreAllGermany** and **#WeAreAllLosers**.

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"Scolari (Manager of the Brazilian national football team) family returning to the locker room"
Hash-tags created by consumers during and after the game: "#WeAreAllGermans" and "#WeAreAllEmbarrassed"

Havainas, a major brand of rubber flip-flops, and Skol, a beer brand, remained silent and risked losing their relevance in the midst of the confusion. These brands used campaigns that directly ridiculed the Argentine team, Brazil's longtime soccer rival. Considering Argentina's triumph as one of the finalists of the 2014 World Cup, these messages act as a thorn in the side of Brazilian national pride. The Havaianas spot features Romário, a Brazilian soccer legend, buying a pair of flip-flops and asking the clerk to package them in two separate bags so that he can ship the left foot sandal (the left foot is bad luck in Brazil) to Maradona, an Argentine soccer legend. Skol's spot features Brazilian fans welcoming and taunting their Argentine neighbors.



Havaianas Campaign Theme: "The right foot is ours."



Skol TV commercial: "Argentines, welcome to our neighborhood."

Today UOL Esporte, a major Brazilian online sports network, described the reaction of the **Confederação Brasileira de Futebol** (the main governing body of soccer in Brazil), as panicked. UOL cited that the confederação has long-term strategic contracts with major brands, and that large sponsors invested close to R\$ 278 Million (about US\$140 M) last year on CBF. But with the state of the current campaigns, CBF's confidence on their return on investment is unlikely to be sustained.

For an industry that is known to be ultra-creative and consistently innovative, these brands could have been more diligent in their overall brand strategy and planning. Even though big brands were slow to react to Brazilian consumers, the damage seems to be only temporary, except for CBF, which will need much more in the next few years than just a plan B.



*A meme shows Scolari as the Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong.
In Portuguese “Mau” means “Bad,” “Sete-Um” means “Seven–One.”*