

Selling Whoppers or selling stupid?

A couple of nights ago, I saw an ad in Burger King's new campaign "Whopper Virgins." The ad, which is shot in a documentary style, and takes us around the world to tiny villages (mostly in Asia) where "people who have never tasted a burger before," are asked to sample a Whopper and another burger. The villagers seem to prefer the Whopper. Thus, "Whopper virgins" prefer Burger King, and so should you. Case closed, right? No.

I was a bit astounded by this campaign. First, I feel that labeling people and using the term "Whopper virgin" is a bit tacky. And then, there is the negative reaction the ad has gotten, as is described in this article in the *Chicago Tribune*, which also ran today in the *Washington Post*. The article claims the ad missed its mark. Other people are writing about this too, saying the ad is ignorant, or colonialistic or worse. Motley Fool (the finance "educators") analyzed the ad, in light of Burger King's other "risky" ad campaigns, and says the company "may have bitten off more than it can chew." BK even issued a press release saying they are investing in the lands of the Whopper Virgins. This also sounds colonialistic.

I am not sure it plays to the best in America to find people who have never had a burger and expose them to the lowest echelon of American cookery—the fast food burger. I get the concept—people who are not biased like our product better—let's run with it. But the final product might be crossing a few boundaries of "taste." In the end, this is typical ad agency behavior (in this case, Cripin Porter): let's sell a concept and then execute in a way that will be funny (to us). In fact, this campaign seems like it took the movie *Borat* to heart, and decided that it would reverse it.

Take *Borat* back out to the country. The thing is *Borat* was funny...but it was hugely offensive.

UPDATE: BK is now selling Flame—a beef scented cologne. Retails for \$4, available online. What a wonderful gift idea—perhaps the Whopper Virgins would enjoy.
<http://tinyurl.com/6pp2ra>