

Zim: Imago Advertising loses accreditation

Beleaguered advertising agency, Imago Advertising, formerly Imago Young & Rubicam, has lost its accreditation after failing to extricate itself from huge debts incurred from a campaign on behalf of President Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF in 2008.

By [Dumisani Ndlela](#) 17 Aug 2010



Sources in the industry said the agency had lost its entire staff to rival agencies and "completely ceased operating".

"My understanding is that they are not in business anymore," said Alistair Carlisle, chairman of the Zimbabwe Advertising Practitioners' Association, of which Imago is a member.

"We've not been informed that they have stopped operating but I've not seen any advertising from them for a very long time," said Carlisle.

Off Adma list

Several media outlets said Imago's name had disappeared from a list of accredited agencies from the Advertising Media Association (Adma). Adma represents the country's media houses and grants recognition to advertising practitioners in the ad business in Zimbabwe.

"We think this is related to huge debts the agency owes media houses in the country for the 2008 campaign. Payment has still not been made to the media houses for the political campaigns and we understand the agency did not receive payment from its client for the advertisements," an executive with a media house said.

Pilate Machado, chairman of Adma, refused to discuss the issue, citing confidentiality.

But when pressed to reveal the status of the agency in the light of reports that Imago was tottering on the brink of collapse, he said: "They are no longer on Adma's books."

Sold for a US dollar

Imago, which was arguably one of Zimbabwe's biggest advertising agencies, reeled into a crisis after global marketing and advertising agency Young & Rubicam (Y&R) sold its 25% stake in the Zimbabwean association over its involvement in advertisements for Mugabe's re-election. Sharon Mugabe, who held 75% of the company, bought the shares for a mere US\$1 and agreed to drop the Y&R reference on Imago's name.

Key clients then deserted the agency, precipitating a sharp fall in revenue.

Formerly Michel Hogg Young & Rubicam, the company was sold to Sharon Mugabe by veteran marketing guru, Michael Hogg in 2005 in what was one of the biggest empowerment transactions in the sector.

The group owned an advertising unit, Imago Y&R, Network Public Relations, Wunderman Action Marketing Ducks in a Row and Brand Value.

Sharon Mugabe was said to be now based in South Africa and not reachable.

ABOUT DUMISANI NDLELA

Dumisani Ndlela is a Zimbabwean journalist specialising in business and financial reporting, with experience reporting on commodities, stock and financial markets, advertising, marketing and the media. He has previously reported from a number of regional countries as well as from the UK and Germany on commodities and regional integration. He can be contacted on dndlela@yahoo.co.uk

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