

Airline discovers why you need balls to mess with FIFA

By Timothy O'Neil-Dunne

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Kulula is an upstart LCC carrier operating in South Africa. It is well known for its guerrilla marketing and its quirky plane paint jobs.



If you like, it is a nicer version of Ryanair. Somehow Gidon Novick the co-CEO is not quite in the same abrasive league as Michael O'Leary.

But the airline is quite successful in its market and provides a good service. At least its engines don't fall off (as happened with now defunct ZA carrier Nationwide).

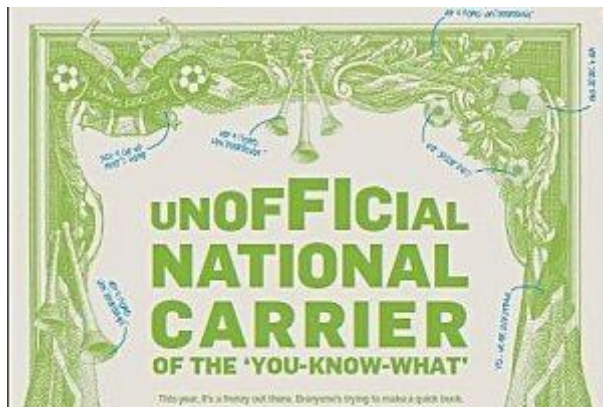
With the World Cup 2010 (that's soccer to those who don't know any better) coming to South Africa in the coming months there is a lot of noise being expended to market the event.

Everyone wants to get on the bandwagon – and Kulula was no different. Except it seems to have run foul of the mighty FIFA.

For those of you who are uninitiated in the ancient right of football (not that cheap American impersonation of rugby), FIFA is the panel of the gods. They rule the game.

And with an extremely healthy war chest they are going after little old Kulula for running a humorous advertisement.

Kulula ran an ad – a portion is reproduced here:



The ad had the above headline and featured soccer-related drawings, including a soccer player, stadium, soccer balls and the South African flag.

FIFA’s lawyers decided to go after the airline in a major way.

Kulula has pulled the ad but in commenting the marketing chief Nadine Damen, says the airline has decided to redo the ad and take out the alleged “nasties” after receiving a letter from FIFA.

She says football’s governing body has taken offence to a number of elements in the ad, including “repeated use of (soccer) balls, the Cape Town stadium, the South African flag and the Vuvuzela”.

“We were surprised to receive their letter, but we have retracted the ad and will be changing the campaign before it flights again,” she says.

“The ad was done in a style true to our brand and, as always, we tried to be quirky and fun. We chose the images and words carefully so as to acknowledge the World Cup period, but not to infringe on their trademarks, but it seems we crossed their very strict line.”

So now you know – a soccer ball is an official trademark.

According to Wikipedia, a vuvuzela, sometimes called a “lepatata” (its Setswana name) or a stadium horn, is a blowing horn, approximately one metre in length, commonly blown by fans at football matches in South Africa.

It’s those silly plastic things that fans have a lot of fun with. So you watch out in what you put in your ads in future!