

The scent of a good advertisement

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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They say that tastes and smells really do have the power to transport you - to another place, or to a wonderful memory.



When it comes to food and drink, there are a few of these sensations which evoke, in vivid “mind colours” a particular experience.

The smell of strong black coffee, more than anything else, says Europe to me – and I remember that European travel trip when the freshly-brewed coffee wafted across the breakfast room in a small hotel outside Toulouse in France. Then, the drink itself was served in the massive bowls which pass for coffee cups in France. Up until then, frankly, I was a tea man, almost exclusively. That changed my point of view – and my life.

Coming back from Paris after a trip to France as newlyweds, I sipped a Cointreau (SAA used to serve that in what was their “Silver Class” in those days) and listened to Edith Piaf’s iconic La Vie En Rose and was instantly there again, in a Parisian street, looking in wonder at the spotlit Eiffel Tower soaring over us.

That is probably why I like the latest Lay’s Chips commercial, which punts their new flavours – French garlic baguette and Portuguese Peri-Peri prawns. So we see a young woman biting into the French pack and suddenly finding herself gazing up at the Eiffel Tower, Edith Piaf playing in the background.

Then, biting into the Portuguese potato chips, she finds herself being swept off her feet in Portugal, as steaming plates of their national dishes whiz around her.

Even removing my own personal nostalgia for Paris and Piaf, the commercial does have the ability not only to place the viewer in those two countries, but the food shots do make the mouth water.

And that's what you want from a food ad. Orchids to Lay's....and, even though I know, intellectually, that these flavours aren't "real", I reckon I'll give them a try.

Deflecting blame again, are we?

According to Rand Water, I am a thoughtless wastrel, the way our household consumes water. Announcing that it was going to choke the water supplies to Gauteng towns and cities, the water body claimed it had given up on trying to get people to curb their consumption.

People in Gauteng, it said in its most censorious voice, consumed an average of 300 litres per day per person, well above the world average of 176 litres per person per day. That was a similar sort of misdirection to that being employed by Eskom which cannot manage a wet paper bag, never mind a power utility. In other words: You people use too much; the crisis is your fault.



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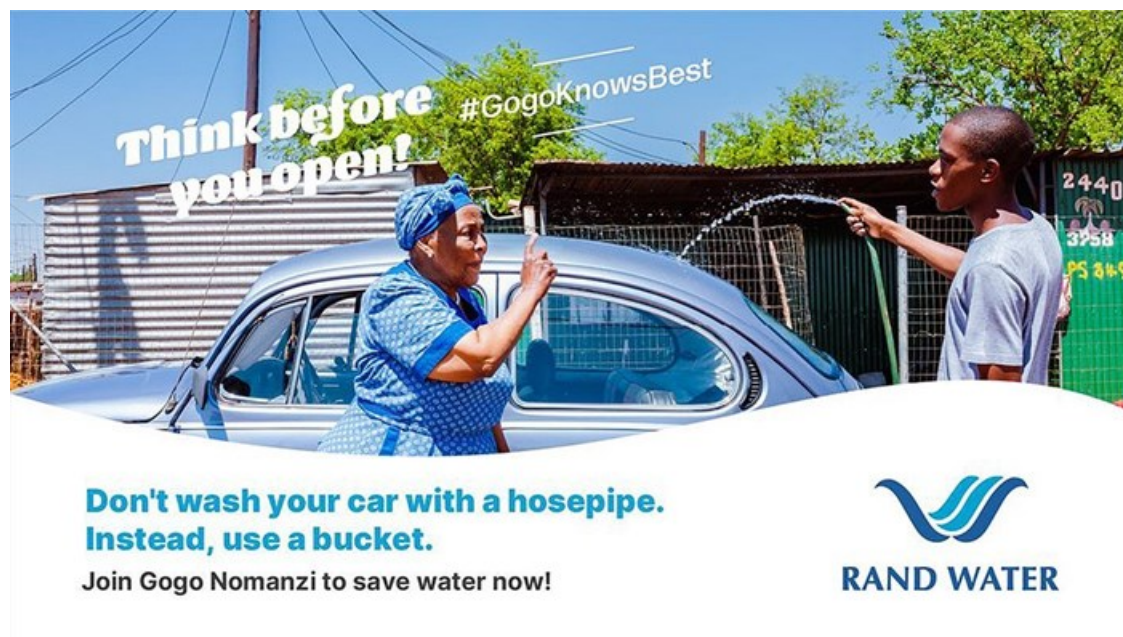


The reality is that the water infrastructure – at both Rand Water and municipal level throughout the province – has been so mismanaged that maintenance has not been carried out, with the result that water leaks cost us around 40% of our supply. In other words, the true average consumption of Gauteng's is actually 180 litres per person per day....not far off the world average. So we are not water criminals without a conscience.

Ironically, Rand Water decided to back up its "save water" message campaign by taking out ads in the *Sunday Times* this past weekend. The paper's lead story was all about how water supply incompetence was the cause of our water crisis...and that our dams are more than 90% full.

The ad uses a character called "Gogo Nomanzi" (presumably the Water Granny) to push the lectures. There is another

“Gogo Nomanzi”, who is a herbalist and traditional healer who has quite a following on YouTube, and while I am not sure whether they are one and the same person, the bottom line is that no one in Gauteng is going to listen to this sort of message.



The campaign is simply not going to work – and you could see that from the responses on Rand Water’s social platforms, which said they should fix the system before lecturing their customers.

Shouting at people who buy your product – and encouraging them to use less even as you want to charge them more (the Eskom corporate marketing playbook’s central tenet) – is never going to win you any friends in the marketplace. Not that a body like Rand Water has to worry about that because it is sheltered employment (i.e. cadre deployment) for ANC comrades.

But because the whole campaign is an affront to consumers, it gets an Onion from me.

Got anything you'd like to say or got any great work I may not know about? Drop me a line at brendanjseery@gmail.com

ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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