

The good, the creative and the slush pile

By [Brendan Seery](#)

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A good advertising creative, I've always thought, needs to be a cross between a comedian and a news editor. The former provides the humour and the latter (at least an old-school hard news editor, who searches out original stories and doesn't "aggregate" the work of others) has the talent to know what is going on in society and what everyone is talking about.



Checkers Sixty60 – the in-a-flash delivery service which established the model for such offerings by supermarket chains – did exactly that with its TV ad ahead of the pulsing final encounter between the Springboks and the All Blacks at Emirates Airline Park in Joburg on Saturday.

There could have been many things to focus on - after all, the stadium formerly known as Ellis Park will forever have a place in SA rugby history after Joel Stransky's last-gasp drop goal sent the All Blacks packing and brought home the Webb Ellis Cup to South Africa for the first time in 1995.



#OrchidsandOnions: Sixty60 Checkers all the boxes

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However, putting together something ahead of such a huge encounter was always going to be a challenge: How do you capitalise on sports fever and patriotism without risking an outright prediction of the result?

Well, if you're Sixty60, you paint yourselves in the same way as the Boks – with a job to perform, on a national stage... something which requires all your skill and grit.

So we see a Jacques Nienaber-like coach, accompanied by someone who might or might not be a stand-in for Rassie Erasmus, giving the team the pre-match pep talk in the change room. And that's where the comedy really meets the news, with some clever comic lines. Being on motorbikes, the delivery people can easily avoid getting "caught at the breakdown" as they fly across town on their urgent missions, for example...

"Nienaber" rolls out the cliched hunger allusions, telling them that "they" are going to be "hungrier, and thirstier – for brandewyn..."

The concept is simple, but the writing is first-class and the marketing message hits home with crystal clarity: your urgent rugby supplies (or anything else you might need, for that matter) will get to you on time.

Just as Sixty60 set the benchmark for this specific type of service, so, too, does its advertising continue to set the benchmark.

So, Orchids to Checkers Sixty60Booth, Retroviral and to its production company, Panther Punch - while not forgetting the writers Glen Biderman-Pam, Oliver Booth and Mike Sharman. Love the gag writing, guys.

The bad side of writing

Writing I do not love is that of copywriters who have only a nodding acquaintance with English. Such was the person who put together a social media ad for Honda's new HR-V small SUV.

This, the writer assured us, "boasts of a sleek and sophisticated design that is perfectly complimented by an elegant interior design...."

Boasts of? Seriously? Complimented? Seriously?

English Lesson Number One: The usage is boasts, not boasts of. You should have picked this up in high school.

English Lesson Number Two: Complimented, in the sense you have used it, means that the elegant interior design said to the sleek and sophisticated design: “Hey, dude, you’re looking gorgeous...” Complimented means praised; complemented (the word you should have used) means, as per the Oxford Dictionary, “contribute extra features to (someone or something) in such a way as to improve or emphasize their qualities.”



Marketing in an existential crisis

8 Aug 2022



While it is bad enough that Honda hired a barely literate person to put its marketing material together (and you didn’t need to, because there are plenty of professional writers out there who would do a much better job); it is just as worrying that none of the senior people who should have read this rubbish and signed off on it, noticed at all.

So, Honda, an Onion to complement your incompetence.

What is so disappointing about Honda’s faux pas is that it is a blue chip brand renowned for quality. You absolutely cannot say the same for any government entity. Yet, even by the almost non-existent standards of professionalism in government communications, the recent tweet by the Gauteng Community Safety Department set a new record for being tone-deaf.

Trying to be helpful, I suppose, the tweet offered advice about how to drive safely around potholes – complete with a photo of a badly scarred piece of tarmac. Unsurprisingly, a torrent of abuse from other users ensued – with most pointing out the obvious...why not fix the potholes rather than tell us how to cope?

An Onion to Gauteng Community Safety – no wonder you deleted your original tweet.

“ Oh dear...who's gonna tell the Mount Nelson hotel that their catchy slogan wasn't thought out properly 💎💎.

pic.twitter.com/K7aeVgqPFT— Daddy (@LifeisSavage) [August 12, 2022](#) ”

Finally, in the “how didn’t anyone notice that?” category is the new slogan for the grand old dame of the South African hospitality sector, the Mount Nelson in Cape Town.

Some bright spark came up with the idiotic slogan “Let’s Mount Nelson together”. Quite apart from the illogicality of the phrase itself, did no one at the hotel or the Belmond group which owns it, think that there was a potential double entendre in there somewhere?

Because, when you couple the slogan with an image of a bare-chested man (perhaps named Nelson) and urge your viewers to “Mount Nelson” some might take it in a completely different way.

Now, all you’ve done, Mount Nelson and Belmond, is cause your brand to go viral on social media for all the wrong reasons.

This quality of advertising does not match, in any way, the image of elegance and sophistication, not to mention propriety, associated with the hotel – so you all get Onions from me.

Got anything you'd like to say or got any great work I may not know about? Drop me a line on brendanjsery@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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