

Case of 11 missing babies

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Nando's: Spot-on comic gem makes us smile at fake news; Another Orchid for comms experts who fill the Covid gap left by alleged corruption.



I once heard it said that life in South Africa is easy for a comedian because the gags write themselves.

That means it's also pretty straightforward for those copywriters working for brands that have, as their stock in trade, a healthy sense of humour.

Nando's, of all of our brands, is the one that has annexed humour as part of its marketing DNA, albeit there is a spicy bit of competition these days from the likes of Chicken Licken.

The latest Nando's ad has been burning up the internet because it 'went viral' quickly. Within hours of its release this week, it was being forwarded in e-mails and WhatsApps countrywide and, no doubt, to Saffers abroad.

In the process, it confirmed what Nando's does even better than flame-grilled chicken, extracting many multiples of what it spends on creating and flying ads in free distribution of its marketing.

The only thing one wonders about the ad is: Why did it take so long?

We see the story of the 'Ekurhuleni 11', supposedly a mass birth of 11 babies to one woman. Everyone flocks to the family, donating a flood of gifts because, obviously, raising 11 children is not cheap. As the tale unfolds, though, we see the one problem with the story is... there are no babies.

And that produces some comic gems in the Nando's ad – like a nervous father signing a document to the 'World Record Book' people and what looks like a minister's bodyguard picking up a round exercise ball to which has been fastened a bra – clearly the device used to produce the "pregnant tummy".

The punchline is that South Africans can't afford fake news, but they can afford a Nando's prego roll and chips for R49.90.

The whole tale would be a great piece of imaginative writing had it not been so closely aligned to the dreadful garbage story of the 'Tembisa Decuplets' which *Pretoria News* started floating in June.

It is fitting that the nadir of journalism in recent times should be commemorated in a Nando's ad. Perhaps we could even add that to the sentences which, hopefully, will be meted out to the state capture crooks – "I sentence you to 10 years hard labour and 90 days of community service as a script consultant for Nando's..."

Yet again, Nando's makes us laugh, but gets across a good commercial selling point too.

That's great advertising so Nando's gets yet another Orchid, as does its agency, M&C Saatchi Abel.

The CovidCommsSA initiative

The sad thing about the whole Digital Vibes alleged corruption involving former health minister Dr Zweli Mkhize is that it stalled whatever communication the government was doing around the Covid pandemic.

Thank goodness then, that a selfless group of communications experts, coming together to form CovidCommsSA, could fill the gap. Seasoned comms man Chris Vick is one of the drivers of the initiative.

Focusing at the moment of a campaign aimed at stopping the fourth wave – with a heavy emphasis on the need for as many people to get vaccinated as possible – it is putting out material daily, on all platforms.

I particularly like their infographics, which are styled on traffic signs and help people navigate the ins and outs of Covid

safety and help to tackle vaccine hesitancy. They go hand-in-hand with simple, yet effective, animations.

It has also been produced in all 11 official languages.

As Vick told a radio interviewer, the idea is to take the science around Covid and the vaccinations and put it into simple words to make it accessible for those who are concerned about the effects of the jab.

Vick says, quite correctly, that there has been a “vacuum of information around the positive nature of vaccines” and that this has been filled with fake news and conspiracy theories.

In helping to redress that, CovidCommsSA is performing a valuable national service.

That means it gets an unequivocal Orchid from me.

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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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