

It keeps going right...

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Toyota: new ad is playful but still does some heavy marketing; They stay true to reality without encouraging clients to behave in unsafe way...

Twice a week I go into the office. It's nice to see some real people again (even though the majority of our newsroom is still working from home or out on the beat) and to lessen, even slightly, the cabin fever of the clichéd "new normal".

But even in the office, I cannot escape the new reality – the world has gone Zoom (or Teams) crazy.

So we still talk in a screen share session. It's become second nature to add this way of conversing now to WhatsApp chats with the kids in Europe or my financial advisors here in Joburg.

Social distancing has affected us all – and nowhere more so than for the brand which punt their products as an essential adjunct to the partying or socialising normal for young people. It's not difficult to see those ads shot BC (Before Covid-19) because they seem almost quaint and out of touch.

So, how to stay true to reality and get that sense of community, of fun, of partying that you want to convey as the essence of your product – without recklessly encouraging your potential customers to behave in an unsafe way?



FCB Joburg launches new 'star' in Toyota SA's galaxy

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Toyota SA and its long-standing agency, FCB Joburg, decided to hold a "virtual" party in the company's newest product aimed at the urban upwardly mobile – the Toyota Starlet. (Toyota would probably not like me to remind you that the car is, in reality, a rebadged and up-specced Suzuki Baleno but cars are my thing and it would not be right to leave that unsaid, as have some motoring "journos" in this town...)

The Starlet is not like its predecessors of the same name, which were tiny econoboxes. The top models here come specced to the hilt with exactly what you need to conduct your digital life. And, as the ad shows us, even if you can't party with your friends, you can have a livestreaming session right from the car.



It comes equipped with Millennial essentials like Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, so the hero in the ad immediately goes to work linking his devices with the system so he can have a hands-free social gathering with his mates.

So, we see his phone strapped to the passenger seat and his friends enjoying the drive – and the car.

It's a clever way of acknowledging both social distancing and one of the key features of the Starlet.

At the same time, on the drive, other notable facets of the car, including its reverse camera and its park distance control, are also highlighted.

The size of the boot is the focus when the driver goes to the back and sees his open laptop connected to another friend... "Sorry, dude, I forgot about you!"

That's a nice little humorous touch at the end and sums up the playful tone of the ad. But, while it may be playful and energetic, it still does some heavy marketing lifting by showcasing what's important in the Starlet.

So, it's great marketing yet again from Toyota. The carmaker gets an Orchid, as does FCB Joburg and director Kofi Zwana

of Hungry Films. The car should get one, too – although I’ve only driven the Suzuki version, I found it a very appealing vehicle.

During lockdown, I have – much to my wife’s annoyance – become quite addicted to YouTube, because I can find all manner of obscure videos on cars and planes.

And by obscure I mean the sort of content that only petrolheads or adgeeks would love.

I’m less irritated these days by having to wait, often for up to 20 seconds, for an ad to play before I can watch the video – or to have it interrupted by ads. That’s not different to TV, or even to a newspaper, where advertising is part of the package.

But what is glaringly obvious in all the online platforms – whether they be video, like YouTube, or others like Facebook or Twitter – is that the clever algorithms they used to serve specifically targeted ads, need just a little bit more work. On FaceBook, I once got ads for cattle auctions in Limpopo. Seriously? I eat the stuff, I don’t have any desire to farm it...

But on YouTube, when I delve into petrolhead of adgeek heaven, what do I get? Ads about cars? No.

Ads about airlines? No. Ads about DIY products when I am watching outspoken American mechanic Scotty Kilmer (who has one of the biggest automotive channels on the platform)? No, I get ads for skin care and beauty products, dental care and, my personal favourite, calcium. I cannot remember the product, save for the fact it was targeted at women...

Advertising that hits the wrong audience – although the advertiser is paying a premium for the clever “programmatic” ways digital advertising is sold these days – does not work.

So, YouTube and Facebook, you get an Onion because your algorithm doesn’t work. But, so do all you advertisers who are throwing away billions of dollars trusting computers to put your ads in the correct place, instead of checking and auditing your spend.

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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