

Clientele ad is both respectful and enticing

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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If insurance is a grudge purchase - at least when it comes to short-term contracts covering your possessions - then there are some forms of which can be likened more to a gift.



That's life insurance and funeral insurance. It's what you leave to your family when you're gone...so hopefully they'll survive financially without you. It won't bring you back or ease the pain of loss, but it takes away some worries.

Simple and effective

Clientele Life has, for years, been doing the sort of "wors case scenario" ads – and it's been doing them well, especially considering that the subjects of dying, or getting landed with an extortionate bill for a medical procedure, are ones most people want to avoid.

Yet, as they say, you can't avoid taxes, nor can you avoid life's other certainty.

This week, I noticed a recently made ad from Clientele Funeral, raising once again the difficult subject of death. This one focuses on the loss and, specifically, the large hole left in family lives by the death of a loved one.

It's simple, but effective. In each of a number of settings, we see happy people together – a retired couple dancing, a young father reaching out to a child while its mother looks on; a family celebration of different generations.

The worst-case scenario sees a loved one slowly erased from each scene, giving a real gut-punch feel of the vacuum left by bereavement.



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The message, in this case, is that you should leave your family a little gift, in the form of a funeral policy, which will help them cover the costs of the funeral but also give them something extra to get by.

It's both a brand ad – touting Clientele Funeral as offering these comprehensive plans – but also a retail one, because there is a special offer of covering one of your payments for you in 2023...and, additionally, a call-to-action WhatsApp number.

Clientele brand ambassadors Lilian Dube and Desmond Dube, by now synonymous with Clientele, lay out the possibilities in a way which is both respectful and enticing. And that's not easy.

This is not the sort of advertising which will appeal to everybody – and there will, no doubt, be those who are actively turned off by it. But it speaks to a target market and it does so very well indeed. Clearly, the fact that Clientele continues to advertise on such a scale indicates that its marketing is hitting the spot.

So, another Orchid to Clientele.

Sloppy work

Many companies do have good stories to tell – and an effective PR company will not only record and tell those stories but will help them get placed in the media, either as “owned” (advertisements or advertorials) or “earned” (editorial coverage).

What never ceases to amaze me, then, is how big companies are paying out big money for bad content – and the placing that content where everyone can see it. It is even more infuriating that, for want of a decent story teller, a company's positive story gets buried in mediocrity or confusion.

Once such example this week was a print advertorial in the *Sunday Times*, by the H&M group and a company called BKB.

For a start, the headline made no sense: “ H&M and BKB launch Biodiversity restoration and regenerative land management currently underway to support South African Farmers”.

How can you launch a programme “currently underway”?

That already started to annoy me. Then, what about explaining, in simple terms, what the companies are about? The H&M Group, I assume, is the multibrand clothing company while BKB Ltd is, the advertorial tells us, “the biggest supplier of RWS (Responsible Wool Standard) globally and BKB is the single largest RWS broker in the world. “

A proper story teller – as opposed to someone compiling something for the auditors – would have expanded on what RWS is and why it is important in an increasingly eco- and -ethically-conscious world.... never mind celebrating the global success of BKB. Heaven knows we need whatever good news we can get in this country at the moment.

The programmes also seem a lot more interesting – and ecologically important – than they are made out to be in an advertorial which is so tedious it seems designed to get people to turn the page. (To be fair: other outlets which used the advertorial did put better, and more logical, headlines on it. Although that didn't make it any more readable...)

This is a huge opportunity lost: This is a good story which has been thrown away by whichever agency the companies hired to do this sloppy job.

There are plenty of professional writers out there – many of them ex-journalists – who do fantastic story telling jobs for clients.

What a pity H&M and BKB couldn't find one of them – it would have saved them getting an Onion for wasting an opportunity to showcase their good work.

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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