

MTN's 'Bright side' really dazzles, but this *Sunday Times* sub sinks without a trace...

By [Brendan Seery](#)

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I've talked before about the mega-battles of the cell phone brands as they launch their end-of-year campaigns (why they focus on summer is a bit beyond me, given that summer's already been underway for almost three months by now).



Screengrabs from the ad.

It's good to see them moving away from those perpetual festive season clichés of party people on beaches (normally Durbs) having fun. Cell C got an Orchid from me recently for their colourful and energetic efforts to get the coveted “millennial” demographic on board.



#OrchidsandOnions: It's going to be a retina-searing summer with Cell C... but there's cynical misdirection from Coca-Cola

Brendan Seery 7 Nov 2017



We've all really been waiting for MTN to see what they'd come up with. And the wait, in my opinion, has been worth it, because the company and its ad agency TBWA\ has produced a visual feast and some of the best animations we've yet seen in South Africa.

And using animation and CGI (computer-generated imagery) is the way you target the gaming generation and those whose lives are lived through, and in, their device screens.



#NewCampaign: Come over to the bright side

Jessica Tennant 28 Nov 2017



What the ad does is take us into the heart of a computer “battle”, where the boundaries between reality and fantasy are not just blurred, they are blown away in technicolour explosions.

At the centre of it all is moving yellow (MTN yellow, of course) oval button which the two contestants keep tapping, as they would with a game console. However, at some stage in the proceedings, a mother pops up to ask: when are you going to be home? To which the only reply (you'll know this, parents) is: I'm busy...

The characters in the game smile in mocking sympathy – a nice touch, again melding fantasy with reality in a seamless way.

The point is that MTN is inviting you, through the oval portal-button, to “Come over to the Brightside”. It works well and is a visual treat – but at the same time makes a good marketing point.

The concept is great, but it would be nowhere without the execution so, in addition to giving MTN and TBWA\ Orchids, I think the people from Wicked Pixels and Monkey Films (under director Daniel Levi) also need to step forward for their Orchids.

It's wonderful to see visual, marketing story-telling is far from dead in this country. This is as good as you'd get anywhere else...

Another quick Orchid this week goes to a PR person – and I don't often hand out those, because of the generally poor state of the business in this country... especially when it comes to being a cost-effective part of a client's marketing machinery.

Hardly had the news hit the wires about Prince Harry's engagement to American actress Meghan Markle, than Amanda Hardy of The Travel Corporation in Johannesburg, was putting out a news-driven press release to travel media, punting her client Luxury Gold's special nine-day Royal tour, which includes all the highlights of the Windsor family's way of life – from the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace to a tour of Edinburgh.

Hardy is an ex-journo and still a news nut, and she knows the value of linking marketing material to what is happening around us.

TTC, which is part of the global corporation run by the Tollman family, who came originally from South Africa, is also one of the masters of producing content for news outlets, which sells their products, as well as being entertaining. PR, as a part of marketing... at its best.

As I start the Onion award this week, I am mindful of two things: that we don't normally criticise our competitors in the newspaper business; and that I am running the risk of getting complaints about lapses in our own subscription system here at *The Citizen*.

Also, one is not supposed to speak ill of the dying. However. Given how Tiso Blackstar (publishers of the *Sunday Times* and *The Times*) deals with its customers, I am not at all surprised *The Times* is being killed off as a print product.



The Times, first in SA to migrate to digital-only delivery

14 Nov 2017



My *Sunday Times* subscription expired last weekend, so I tried to renew it online. There was a helpful link in the reminder email, which I duly clicked and tried to pay using my credit card. However, I entered the wrong expiry date, so the bank rejected the payment – quite correctly.

But when I clicked on the email again, I could not repeat the process. Instead, there was a message from Tiso Blackstar saying there was a problem and giving me what appeared to be an email address to click on.

When I did so, using my Firefox web browser (because I don't trust Google on anything personal), I was told the link could not be opened and special software might be needed). I tried it again (on Google, because I was getting frustrated) and, again, it didn't work. In the meantime, I got a reply email from Tiso Blackstar informing me the payment hadn't gone through.

I replied to that email – and to two others I have found on various emails. These included real people in the subs department. A week later – no response. Even the phone help line rang unanswered...

Customer service is something which should be top of mind in an industry facing huge pressure, like the newspaper business. The fact that it clearly isn't for Tiso Blackstar, gets them the commemorative "Shoot Yourself In The Foot" Onion.

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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