

The future of advertising may be - shock! horror! - digital fraud

 By [brendan seery](#)

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There are many moments which remain in our memories but, for a petrolhead like me, it will always be the moment I first had control of a car...when I managed to get it moving forward in first gear without stalling and then, because we had a long driveway, a quick change into second gear and braking to a stop.



Screengrabs from the ad.

I guess I have always been fascinated by cars, even before I got behind the wheel of one and the way you can tell I am a true petrolhead is that I will drive anything with wheels – and enjoy it. In my time, I have piloted everything from a Ferrari and a Lamborghini to a Morris Minor and driving has never lost its fascination for me.

In the past few years, the debate about “autonomous driving” has been gathering steam. This envisages a future where electronics, robotics and computers will guide vehicles to their destinations without any human input.

That, to my mind anyway, is like intravenously injecting bags of plastic nutrients into your body when you could be dining on the finest French food.

In this country, thank goodness, autonomous driving is some way off – although some cynics might say a version of it has

already arrived because so many vehicles on our roads are not under the control of human beings...

Interestingly, despite the move towards robotic transport, many motor manufacturers are making more interesting, faster, and more powerful cars aimed at people who love to drive.

That's why I was drawn to the TV ad for Kia's new Stinger high-performance sedan.



Kia Stinger to debut in SA in August

18 Apr 2018



The car is a radical departure for a brand which has always pitched itself as different – “The Power to Surprise” is its most well-known slogan – because it has been targeted directly at the sporting products from the high-end German manufacturers. And, the motoring journos who've tried the car have been astounded at how good it is.

Kia needs to throw a lot of marketing muscle behind the Stinger, though, because the brand is not normally associated with performance. Quality and reliability, yes... but, up to now, sportiness – well, not so much.

The challenge has been to convince loyal brand followers to give the Stinger a try.

Around the world, Kia campaigns for the car have focused on its driveability, but, here in South Africa, the brand and its agency, OFYT (Old Friends Young Talent) have managed to put a different, but effective spin on the driving enjoyment aspect.

With the *de rigueur* shots of the car blasting around a race-track, the ad simply asks one question: What is the future of driving? Then it answers it: Maybe the future of driving is actually driving.

It's a great line, and it sums up the car. I think it will help Kia sell the car in this country, where many of us are not quite prepared to surrender our increasingly guilty pleasures to robots. Not only that, but the ad could have a halo effect for the rest of Kia's products, which share the same automotive DNA as the Stinger.

So, to Kia South Africa and to OFYT, Orchids for good marketing and for reminding us (not that some of us needed it) that cars are more than just means of transport.

The second biggest criminal enterprise on the planet at the moment – after drugs – is digital advertising. As much as half of all “interactions” in cyberspace come from some form of “bot” – a piece of computer programme which replicates a human. And then there are the “click farms” which, for a modest fee, will drive your product's, or site's, all-important numbers into the stratosphere.

You can buy shares, likes, users with a few clicks of a mouse. And then you can go and hoodwink the people who are paying you money to use your allegedly enormous numbers as a medium to promote their products.

And that's without even talking about CTRs (Click Through Rates – or the actual number of times an ad is clicked on), which are generally half a percent or less. In other words, your wonderful digital ad will only be seen by one in every 200 people (or bots).

For me, though, the absurdity of an industry which is doing flick-flacks to convince everyone it is effective, and honest, is the voodoo science around “interactions”.

Excuse me, but I call bulls#t on all of it.

Last week, we had experts telling us that the social media and cyberspace debate around the Ashwin Willemse TV walk-off had a “reach” of 3.8 billion.

Stupid, uneducated person that I am I asked an expert, Tonya Khoury, how it was possible that around one in two people on the planet were debating something about which, frankly, even the majority of South Africans don't give a damn.



You are losing money on ads that don't appear

Chris Mberdyk 17 Mar 2016



She explained – as one has to do to an old-fashioned person who still believes the oppressive lie that one and one equals two – that “Reach is the number of outlets & their readership or the number of followers of any tweeter /instagrammer. It doesn't mean that many people “read” it – it's the reach of the story. For example #Trump 1 tweet on #Gaza garnered reach of 52M.”

She went on that “some people call it #ImpressionData – I don't like the term because it gives the impression that the post made an impression :)”

Exactly.

If I assessed our newspaper in the same way, I would say that because we distribute in Gauteng, and Gauteng has a population of 12 million, our reach is 12 million. But then each of those 12 million knows another ten people, so our reach is 120 million. I cannot believe any marketer doesn't question this.

In the end, Tonya revealed that there were around 150 000 people involved in the “conversation” about Willemse. In others words, one in every 300 people in South Africa.

That's the reality, not the fanciful dreams of “reach”.

Anyone putting out that garbage gets an Onion from me and any marketer paying the slightest bit of attention to it should explain to his or her company's shareholders why he's wasting their cash on listening to bullshit...

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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