

Keep your laptop closed and your presentation private

 By [Peter Mann](#)

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The flight from Joburg to Cape Town appeared empty. My aisle seat had two empty spaces in the row until *they* arrived and proved once again that you should never use your laptop to discuss business on an aircraft.



You never know who might be sitting next to you...

I should have pegged them as advertising guys immediately...dark jeans, t-shirts...I wonder whether the company and particularly the brand manager they were off to workshop with, would have been happy with the discussion I was helplessly party to - including the rather ordinary PowerPoint presentation, the project plan, the strategy and the creative...

And how could they know that the older guy trying to read his book next to them, had actually worked on the company's product in question once upon a time; that his company now has another liquor client - and that he thinks their strategy and creative - the fellow passengers', that is - are up to sh*t.

When we worked on the product many years ago it was quite a fascinating specialist brand... a bit of an acquired taste. It was consumed by a breed of mainly/manly men who wore trousers that were still colloquially known as "John Orrs" from the shop that had sold them. These men were most passionate about jazz and were members of township jazz clubs and jazz societies.

The strategy

The company's consumer strategy was to promote trial among this group. They had evidence that about four of every 100 people they could persuade to trial the product - at least four times in a month - would adopt it as their brand of choice; and another couple would include the product in their repertoire of brands.

So they sponsored jazz - clubs, events, groups - to talk directly to these consumers, and drive this pipeline, promoting trial; whilst targeting secondary consumer groups at the same time. It had always seemed like a good, focused strategy, and one

which delivered measurable results.

So I eavesdropped shamelessly while surreptitiously watching the PowerPoint. Adman 1 seemed to be the strategist. He was slightly older, hard-worn and given to remarks about his hot new female colleague (who was the subject of some testosterone-fuelled ribald discussion) that if he was only a bit younger and not quite so married, well she would be in trouble... She seemed to be a different target from their other young colleague sitting two rows ahead of us, who he also clearly had his eye on - such is the male psyche...

Catchy quotes, core insights

Anyway his strategy/consumer insight, as explained to Adman 2 who seemed to be a creative; was that we should all pause and take time to appreciate the things around us - the sun, the sky, the environment, all the free, "wow shoo the mountain dude" stuff. He had some catchy quote, which Adman 2 professed to think was very deep, about appreciating the riches all around us rather than wanting to possess them. Dressed in deep advertising bullsh*t, it seemed to come down to a philosophy that he could appreciate a Ferrari and its beauty without having to own it himself - thus sparing himself the unenviable task of having to pay for it, service it, insure it and (presumably) drive it.

This, God help us all, seemed to be the core consumer insight they were apparently to present to the brand manager.

The peeks I had at the creative didn't seem much better. The TVC was played a couple of times, but I couldn't watch overtly enough to form an opinion. The print seemed to have been subcontracted to a coastal agency that I know and don't admire. At limited first glance, they seemed pedestrian - with much play being made of the golden colour of the foaming product when poured, set against a blue background - which apparently on occasions looks like silk - "isn't that amazing, man".

How, I wondered, had they got this job? It seemed so superficial and limited.

Now I know that I am being unfair. They may have a wonderful strategy which is going to sell veritable oceans of the product - hectolitres, megalitres, even billions of litres of the stuff. Maybe we are all going to become converts and activists for the brand.

I don't think so, somehow; and here is rule Number 1 of flying and computer etiquette - don't share your prized presentation; you never know who is sitting next to you!

ABOUT PETER MANN

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