

Keeping it simple is always the best way to go

Simple always works in advertising. This week, the Independent Electoral Commission has been running a TV ad urging people to register as voters because time is running out.

If features just a woman, moving towards the screen, as we are urged to "Rise up and register!"

She walks right up to the screen, stares you in the face and places her X right there. (Obviously they used a piece of glass over the camera lens, but the effect is, nevertheless, impressive. An Orchid to the IEC for not overdoing and sticking to the message. If only some commercial brands remembered that.

Less effective is someone who has no idea how to use e-mail – and repeatedly sends the same missive.

Orchids & Onions

Irritating enough, but excusable in most lines of work. Inexcusable in anyone pretending to do public relations publicity.

As I write this, I have received the same e-mail 20 times (actually, it's now 21) from one Tracey Stuart from Glomail.

The press release is about the company triumphing against HTH pool chemicals in an action at the Advertising Standards Authority.

What the details of that action were I know not – but worse, I care not.

So, Glomail, for allowing someone who has no idea how to use e-mail to send out your important marketing information, you look amateurish and get this week's Onion.

– *Brendan Seery*

Your Orchids and Onions of January 24 was very relevant to me – having experienced the same personalised service from my local PnP, Norwood hypermarket: not by receiving birthday cakes, but by the long-term staff really getting to know customers and sorting out problems satisfactorily. (Glen, Teresa, Jane, take a bow.)

I too had a 1974 Toyota for some 30 years, which began taking my daughter to nursery school and ended with her driving it to work – resulting in all the family all driving Toyotas, or at least Japanese cars, ever since.

And I couldn't agree more that South African companies don't recognise the value of loyal customers. The perception appears to be that what you are told by advertising overrides the customer's real experiences, when in reality, exceptional service, be it great or ghastly, is never, ever forgotten.

I often reflect on this, for instance, while standing in the inevitable long queue at Absa, staring at the poster telling me I will not know what to do with all the leisure time available when I use their internet banking, which I do, but I still need counter service for many transactions. Even *The Star* is guilty of only wooing

Thumbs-up or down? Here's what our readers have to say

new or casual readers, giving away freebies with copies sold on the street, and gifts to new subscribers – my 30 years' loyalty has yet to be rewarded.

– *Sonja Bulkin, Joburg*

You are so right about South African companies not appreciating customers' loyalty!

A case in point would be my husband's 1-o-n-g association with Standard Bank ... he opened his first (and only) banking account with them when he was a lad of 18. He is now almost 77, and if one does the maths, he should be regarded as a pretty special client – but not at all!

When I discovered that FNB, and now Nedbank, offered an account that would give him all the facilities he uses for R66 (or R65 in Nedbank's case) a month, I pointed out those fees to Standard and inquired why he has to pay R170 a month for the same service. The reply I received was pretty much along the lines of "If you don't like it, move on!". I was horrified!

You would think that a long-standing client of pensionable age, with a reasonable bank balance, would qualify for some sort of reduction in their monthly fees.

– *Carolyn Carr*

I am sure you have had masses of moans about these adverts, but let me add my voice to the chorus:

Olga Jewellers: An idiotic child's voice saying "When I am big I'll get married, and when I am more big I will get a diamond ring." This is the wrong way around, will not make me want to buy a diamond ring and is putting out ridiculous values.

Dynamic Beds: Why do they think I would want my bed to be dynamic? I want my bed to be restful!

CyberNet: Need I spell it out? I just switch off the radio when that stupid and insulting thing comes on. How can radio stations put up with such nonsense?

– *Daphne Jubber*

I have been interested in the correspondence about competitions. They say one of the questions to which you can never answer "Yes" is "Have you ever known anyone who won a prize in one of those SMS with your unique number, barcode, etc competitions?"

Nevertheless, I've risked the R1.50 per SMS charge recently to send in the "unique number inside your pack", hoping to win "one of ten R20 000 shopping sprees" offered on Kellogg's All-Bran packs.

Once I bought two boxes of All-Bran and found the identical number inside both boxes. Obviously Kellogg's use a different dictionary to mine, one in which "unique" does not mean "different from all others".

– *Anne Parker*

My Onion is awarded to those travel agents and airlines who persist in using a totally fictitious price for air travel in their advertising "excluding surcharges and taxes"; fictitious because nobody can travel at the exclusive price shown, and secondly, because the amount of fuel surcharge is at the airlines' whims. Hats off to Virgin Atlantic for their no-nonsense approach of quoting an inclusive fare.

– *Cedric Harris, Rondebosch*

Just put on a happy face

Optimism is the new advertising buzzword

Staff Reporter

Gloom, doom and despondency: that's all you see out there. So why would anyone think that the outlook is optimistic? A branding and design agency has analysed the visual cues we see all around us in advertising and marketing, and reckons the forecast is positive.

Coley Porter Bell SA have a forward-looking consumer and trends insight project they call VisualFutures which, each year, identifies a major trend that will have an impact for the months ahead.

Mathew Weiss, planning director at Coley Porter Bell SA, says we really should be considering the glass half full and not half empty.

"It's not the best of times right now. Our economy is slowing down, international banks are collapsing around our ears. Inflation remains above forecasts and now unemployment is back in the news. Add to this the old issues of violent crime, HIV/Aids and power shortages, and it's little wonder that people aren't feeling that positive about the future."

It's human nature that, when times are tough, people look for signs of optimism and are pulled towards them. It's easy to get a warm glow for instance, when we consider how the Proteas have been handing out cricket lessons to our arch foes, Australia. But, says Weiss, consumers look to brands to offer a more positive outlook, embracing optimism in the way they position themselves and their communication.

And, if brands and those who market them are on their toes, they will take their lead from events around us. One of the most important – earth-shattering even – was the ascent to the White House of the first black US president, Barack Obama.

Say Weiss: "His message has inspired not just America but the whole world – the celebrations went worldwide when he was inaugurated. His positive message has really galvanised this new optimistic brand movement."

Obama's campaign was the best designed in history, adds Weiss, and even the design of Obama's horizon logo suggests an optimistic view on America's future.

Closer to home we have our own reasons to be positive, says Weiss.

"The formation of COPE may not have created the euphoria Obama produced but it represents a positive step in the evolution of democracy in this country, and a credible opposition is a good thing."

Elsewhere, positive messages have generated huge responses.

Danny Wallace, the author of *Random Acts of Kindness*, describes himself as "a cult leader" of the Karma Army. The book describes 365 random acts of kindness like writing to an old teacher to say thanks, being nice to a policeman, or simply making someone feel good about themselves.

"Here an optimistic message is in a small way also an empowering message," notes Weiss.

Juan Mann is a kindred spirit of Wallace – he created the Free Hugs campaign. Returning to his hometown of Sydney, he made a "free hugs" sign and stood out on the street. His sole mission was to reach out and hug a stranger. He created such a buzz



Barack Obama's brilliant advertising campaign galvanised the new optimistic brand movement. His positive message spread far beyond the US (above). This spirit of optimism in the Cell C ad "You're part of the network" captures this spirit.



on the city's streets, however, that the police banned him for being a public nuisance. But more than 10 000 people signed a petition supporting him and he was allowed to carry on. Since then the Free Hugs campaign has become a phenomenon, with people all over the world joining in and with over 26-million hits on YouTube.

"In this case, optimism is about making people feel more connected and less isolated," says Weiss.

In SA, "simply the advantage of having more and better choices (like COPE) in a country where for many there was a distinct lack of choice, is itself a tangible benefit that supports the optimism message."

The arrival of second headline telecommunications operator Neotel is a good example. Their message – that we're too often told what we can't do and that they are going to tell us what we can do – is highly optimistic.

Another positive campaign is the Coca-Cola "Brrr!", where people are encouraged to live "on the Coke side of life". More than 100 contemporary artists and designers were invited to bring this positive thinking to life by creating poster designs with this sentiment at heart.

The phenomenal success of the campaign demonstrates the success of this strategy, says Weiss.

"The expression of refreshment as an involuntary shudder that is full of energy, fun and optimism is the perfect way to demonstrate Coke's 'glass half full' philosophy," he adds.

"Brands are reaching out to touch a nerve of consumer desire for something that can lift the spirits, no matter how small."

Hand-crafted typography is also being used to represent an immediate, more intimate form of expression – a more

personal solution than Helvetica. Bespoke typography, accompanied by a simple illustration, gives Absa's "self-empowerment" print ads and Vespa's "Spring is here" campaign a strong emotional pull, argues Weiss.

Colour is also key in expressing this trend. Bold, bright colours have reassured themselves on the catwalks and in the interior mags. Locally, affordable interior design brands have been picking on this trend, with @home and Mr Price introducing brightly coloured furniture that encourages people to be more expressive.

By using simple visual cues, design can create an optimistic framework through which brands can channel their communications.

Embracing optimism is also about helping to build confidence in the country's potential. The media is doing a fine job of reflecting the grimmer side of our reality, says Weiss, and brands can offer "an alternative, more positive reality that will help show where this country can go".

Cell C's "You're part of a network", MTN's "Clap Clap" and Dulux's "Any colour you can think of" have all shown how this can be done effectively.

Weiss notes that the optimism in design is "not about brands promising the earth or being in denial of reality", but brands can become the change they want to see in the world.

"None of this is going to lower interest rates or keep us safe on the streets, but it can give us just what we need right now – a little bit of joyfulness, a little light of optimism in the everyday things with which we surround ourselves: the everyday choices we make."

It can give us just what we need – a bit of joyfulness



Who's happening in the industry

In SA and nearly two at the SABC. During this career, Moyane worked his way up from trainee reporter to news editor, to talkshow host and from station manager to executive chairman of a subsidiary of a JSE-listed company.

Gumtree.co.za, the online classifieds portal which was launched in South Africa in 2005, has signed on Habari Media, the specialist online media sales company, to manage advertising for its local operation. Google's latest South African list of the top 10 fastest-growing search topics has Gumtree in first place. The site currently attracts over 1-million users a month.

Ogilvy Cape Town has won the American Swiss advertising account. Jewellery retailer American Swiss is a division of the Foschini Retail Group.

Strats Inc has been appointed by B-T Staal Konstruksie to create a strategic blueprint for the company as well as implementation thereof. Based in Delmas, B-T is one of SA's top 10 steel companies.

Primedia Face 2 Face has promoted Marilize Henning to account manager.

Cathryn Treasure has been appointed general

manager for Mark Shuttleworth's HIP2B2 (Hip to be square) brand.

Shuttleworth launched HIP2B2 five years ago with the intention of inspiring young learners to focus on STEM (science, technology, entrepreneurship and maths) subjects as the best means of opening a new world of opportunity.

Treasure joins the HIP2B2 team from Incite Sustainability, where she consulted on sustainability and communications.

Prior to that, Treasure spent several years as head of marketing and communications for the South African office of the world's largest independent conservation organisation, WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), before taking on the equivalent role for WWF's South Pacific Programme, based in Fiji.

Press control the norm in Sudan

Heidi Kingstone

The only good news as a print journalist to come out of Darfur when the crisis erupted in 2003 was that people realised they couldn't believe what they saw on TV or heard on the radio. Both were considered tools of the government. As a result, when the papers are published, there is a flurry of activity at the news-sellers. At the market in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, just before Eid, the competition to get a copy hot off the press was fierce. You have to be quick before they sell out.

This is true in urban centres – like El Geneina and El Fashir – where the level of literacy is much higher than in rural areas. There the population still has to rely mainly on radio. Regardless of whether you read a newspaper, watch TV or listen to the radio, the quality of journalism is sorrowful.

The English-language papers read like propaganda sheets.

(The *Khartoum Monitor* is close to the semi-autonomous government of South Sudan, and the *Daily News* is close to the Khartoum government.) And the English was so mangled, I felt tortured in the end.

My heart sunk even further when I went to a TV station in Nyala to talk about journalism. Part of their content consists of filming official visits, which must make for riveting viewing, more propaganda than insightful reporting, especially when the official involved goes to the camp to speak to the internally displaced and urges them to go home – where there is nothing for them to return to.

The Khartoum-based government is very strict when it comes to the press, which it views either as the enemy or simply as a government tool.

The TV reporter told me how it was also his mission to spread brotherly love. That is not a Western consequence of journalism, for sure, but perhaps in the light of how effective Rwanda's Radio Mille Collines was in spreading hate, possibly the reverse could be true.

From personal experience I can attest to the heavy hand of media censorship. I had planned to travel into other parts of Sudan with an aid agency. As a journalist, to travel outside of Khartoum you need government-issued permits. The charity had arranged everything. The dates, flights and accommodation were all confirmed. All I needed was permission from the Humanitarian Aid Committee, a government ministry.

The rules change regularly, which makes it difficult to know what to do. The HAC insisted that both the charity and myself wrote letters promising that I would not write anything negative about the government. In the

unlikely event that I would agree, they wanted me to submit my copy before publication. Had I agreed to this, and not kept my word, the likelihood is that the government would have closed the charity down.

In April 2007, Reporters Without Borders issued a report entitled "Darfur: An investigation into a tragedy's forgotten actors". They reported that their "team found that the Sudanese press, like the country's society as a whole, is both active and diverse."

Even in Darfur, the team was able to talk to members of a very real civil society, one that is aware of the unfolding tragedy and the challenges it must face.

The newspapers published in Khartoum are also very diverse, and reflect the voices of Sudanese human rights activists, university researchers and other civil-society actors – voices that find it hard to make themselves heard outside Sudan.

Adam Mahdi works for *Al Ahdath* in Nyala. Government censors screen every article at every newspaper. Reporters are free in theory to write what they want, but of course cannot. A security censor, an official from the National Security office, is a permanent member of staff.

On occasion they will leave in articles that embarrass their political partners, like the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, which now forms part of the Government of National Unity along with the ruling National Congress Party.

While they might allow articles to pass that embarrass their enemies, there are clear red lines. Those include military and security issues. It is also impossible to take pictures. For some reason the government is extremely sensitive about this. Editors will censor material and omit contentious passages. What the editors don't get, the official censors will.



A Sudanese man reads a newspaper, but it's likely the contents have been heavily censored. PICTURE: AMR NABIL / AP

NEW 14 LSM's EXPLAINED AT AMASA'S FEBRUARY MEETING

The 10 LSM market segmentation tool is a thing of the past. The model has been increasingly disconnected from the reality of developments in the South African marketplace.

Well respected media industry expert Gordon Muller helps make sense of the new 14 segment LSM model by offering insights into a cluster model that will make LSMs more usable as a sensitive and strategic marketing and media planning tool.

Miss it and miss out!!

Topic: New 14 LSM's explained
Date: Wednesday 4 February 2009
Venue: JSE, 1 Exchange Square, Gwelo Lane (Parking available at Village Walk)
Time: 16h00 for 16h30
Cost: AMASA Members - Free; Non-Members - R50



Cinemark has appointed Steve Wassermann as the new senior account executive at Cinemark. Cinemark is South Africa's principal cinema advertising company

President Kgalema Motlanthe has appointed Dan Moyane to the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) board for a term of three years. Moyane represents the broadcast media on the board. The president further renewed the terms of office of Ingrid Louw and Baby Tyawa.

Moyane is the group chief executive officer of Mazole Holdings, which is a marketing, media and business communications company. He has been in the radio broadcasting industry for 28 years, 11 of which were spent in the public broadcasting sector in Mozambique, 15 in a private commercial broadcaster