

Scientists sail across the seas to satisfy their KFC craving

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Despite the inexorable advancements of technology, the old recipe for a successful ad still works today: tell an interesting story that entertains and weave it around your brand.



That old-school storytelling is not commonplace today, in South Africa or marketing globally. So it's refreshing to see that not only can it still be done, it can be done well.

At first glance, the premise behind KFC's latest ad (by Ogilvy South Africa) seems ridiculous: two scientists who are so desperate for a taste of KFC that they go AWOL from their Marion Island research base, grab a boat and head to the nearest KFC store, which happens to be in Cape Town, 2,300km away across the frigid and forbidding Southern Indian Ocean.

The idea is that some people will go to any length for their favourite chicken and so the exaggeration makes the point. It also emphasises that KFC lovers are part of a like-minded community, no matter where they might find themselves in the world.

Marion Island is the interesting place at the heart of the idea; not everybody is aware that the island is South African territory and is a proclaimed nature reserve, which is off-limits to people other than research scientists.

And the work they are doing there – on animals, marine life and the climate – has been recognised for its importance by the global scientific community.

Working with its PR agency, KAmuses, KFC decided that, ahead of the ad's debut, it would do some "seeding" in the media by way of advertorials and some clever inserts of information – the idea being that when the ad broke, people wouldn't scratch their heads and say: "Where?"

The material, in which KFC's identity was obscured, worked well because it was valuable editorial content, showcasing a part of the South African scientific community that not much is known about.

One of the ideas was to insert apparent radio calls from the alleged fugitive KFC hunters, as they made their way north. These flighted on radio stations and were also picked up by the National Sea Rescue Institute, which grew concerned.

KFC responded in Morse Code, the language of distant and distress communication, and donated R25,000 to the rescue organisation.



#BehindtheCampaign: KFC's *Beyond the Sea* leads to 25k donation to NSRI

15 Apr 2024



That gesture underlined the broader impact of the ad.

While it conveyed KFC's message, it also did good things for the broader community, from scientists to sea rescuers.

That's when advertising goes from good to great.

Orchids, then, to KFC, Ogilvy SA, 0307 Productions and PR company KAmuses.

A possible foreshadowing from Trump

Ex Trump semper aliquid novi.

Roughly translated, that means there's always something new coming out of Donald Trump – not necessarily wise and often

bizarre, but certainly new.



His latest was an ad flighted on his Truth Social platform, as Americans prepared to witness the solar eclipse.

Against the background of the stirring music of “Also Sprach Zarathustra” (theme for the sci-fi classic *2001:A Space Odyssey*), the ad showed the outline of the head of the Trumpster rising to block out the sun.

Interwoven with scenes of rejoicing, it proclaimed this was the “most important moment in human history”, followed by “We will save America.”

Visually appealing, but did anyone consider the different messages that a viewer could take away from this? For instance, this is the figure who will plunge his country into darkness?

I’ve repeatedly said that any ad that is open to interpretation, especially interpretation that can seriously damage the brand being punted, is bad advertising.

In giving this an Onion, I have just one thought: God help America.

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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