

Everything we know is changing

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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There was a time when Telkom, the formerly wholly state-owned telecoms company, was one of the brands South Africans loved to hate. The company was even nicknamed "Hellkom" by those who struggled to get help with phone lines, dial-up internet and even fibre.



There are probably legions of people who are still sticking pins into the proverbial Telkom doll although – touch wood – I am not one of them. I have fibre at home and, apart from the regular interruptions, thanks to Eishkom and MTN's non-existent data service during loadshedding, I am fairly satisfied, even with a 25Mb/s upload and download speed.

Big buck brand ads for Telkom are few and far between – perhaps because it is aware it could provoke some of its detractors, but perhaps also there have been memorable Telkom ads in the past which set the bar pretty high.



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19 Aug 2022



Who can forget "Molo!", which showed the dramatic changes to life in a rural community which followed the installation of landline phones?

The latest commercial for the brand is a world away from that – and reminds us of how far we have all come...as providers and consumers of "communication".

In the latest execution, we see a girl hurrying her father along (yep, seen that before) to get her to the event she is taking part in at the beach.

Scores of kids are sorting out last-minute touches to their assembled drones, which then take to the air as the sun sets, and light up individually, only to come together to form a wondrous 3D heart shape in the sky.

The spot is called “Made of Monate” and showcases Telkom’s way of seamlessly connecting South Africans in what the company says is the way to a better life through “universal communication”.

I think the idea owes its genesis to something similar – but all entirely in real-time, as opposed to being co-ordinated in “post-production” – done for New Year in Dubai.

Still, it’s different and bang up-to-date in terms of tech, so it gets across the point of Telkom (and its “Monate” data packages) as the facilitator.

I like it when brands like this go big and push their brand – and the emotions around it – because it is so much more moving, and memorable, than call-to-action executions.

So Orchids to Telkom for a worthy successor to “Molo!” – and to ad agency Wunderman Thompson SA – as well as Monde Gumedede of production house Massif.

Not everything *needs* to be changed

I must confess I don’t quite know what to make of FNB’s new campaign about its changed logo and changed banking app.

I thought its “Changeables” slogan and campaign was silly, to be honest. Do I want a bank that changes? I want good service and decent charges (from a South African bank? I know I sound like I’m smoking my socks...).



The new logo is simplified from the original African thorn tree one...with nods to the wonderful tech future with a stylised bit of a Wi-Fi symbol forming the centrepiece.

I know there is always a lot of pushback on brands changing logos especially. And I would point out that many clever corporate marketing people love to fix what ain't broke.

Cases in point: Ford, Chevrolet, Mercedes-Benz and BMW. All of these brands have been around for more than a century and haven't messed too much with their logos...

FNB's changes have been subtle rather than radical – but attracted criticism on social media for a range of reasons, ranging from the fact that the new logo looks “less African” to that it could be the logo of a sushi restaurant.

My real issue is that FNB threw the entire kitchen sink of its media budget at it...making agencies and their associates lots of money. The spend on buying air on social media backfired as far as I am concerned – at least for people with more than a brain cell in their heads, who could see that the paid-for Internet shills were contributing nothing to the conversation other than being praise singers.

Ditto with paid-for “experts”. You shouldn't have to buy praise. And you can't buy authenticity.

Another irritation was the plain lie: You asked, we listened. I didn't ask. No one from FNB ever asked me for my opinion. Had they done so, I would have told them to spend more time sorting out idiocies like the fact my debit card gets repeatedly “soft blocked” (even after I repeatedly unblock it) and I get to look like an idiot at a paypoint.

When I made that comment on Twitter, I was contacted by the “RBJacobs” FNB account – probably the most famous customer care handle in the country – so let's see how that turns out.

FNB you get an Onion for, I believe, trying to fix what didn't need fixing and spending time and money instead of really improving the customer experience.

I wait to see what RBJacobs comes up with...

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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