

Shoprite Checkers and 99 cents keep raising the bar

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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At the risk of being labelled a Shoprite Checkers groupie, I have to say that when it comes to marketing and advertising, the group is on a tsunami of a roll at the moment.



They've collected a number of Orchids from me in recent times and they're going to again ... this time for reminding us that South African advertising can be – at its best – clever and funny, without being “in-joke” or obtuse clever... while at the same time selling a product.

Tom Cruise

The product which has just been launched by the group is [Xtra Savings Plus](#), “a monthly subscription offering unlimited free Sixty60 grocery deliveries, more personalised offers and an additional in-store discount.”

To punt the idea, they got hold of a Tom Cruise lookalike (name's Miles "not the world's most famous actor" Fisher, they say) and used him to push the concept while gently nodding to the superstar's most famous movies – and a few of his most famous cliched lines.

"Tom" arrives over Cape Town (weather permitted, obviously) in the F-14 Tomcat fighter which was his mount in the *Top Gun* movies (original and the recent update, which perhaps could have been titled *Middle Age Gun*) – and the ad reprises the scene of him racing his superbike along a runway. This time, though, he's accompanied by a squadron of the ubiquitous Checkers Sixty60 delivery.

I could spot a couple of other movies, like *Mission Impossible* and even *cocktail*, the movie Tom starred in way back in 1988.



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Brendan Seery 19 Sep 2023



Although "not the world's most famous actor" is not quite a dead ringer for Cruise, he's close enough to make you pay attention and when you pay attention, you can hear the essence of the offering.

So, it works as entertainment and it works as marketing. Once again, then, Orchids to Checkers and the team from 99 cents (their long-standing agency).

Heritage day

Another area in which Sixty60 was involved in this weekend and which piqued my curiosity – because it says something about our society – was the effort to host braais for South African rugby fans who were in Paris for the match against Ireland. It's not the first time that the group has reached out to the South African diaspora – last year, it put ads in Australian newspapers showcasing SA products...and their prices. If that didn't make Saffas in Oz homesick, it would have made them jealous.

The braai event was a nod to the fact that so many South Africans, for one reason or another, are now living abroad, but still feel that pull of the heartstrings when the national anthem is played. Sad, really, but a clever move by Checkers to include those people in its Springbok sponsorship – because many of them still have relatives and friends here...



Checkers launches Xtra Savings Plus

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Another company doing a similar thing, with Saffas in the UK this time, was Bokomo, which launched a promotion around Heritage Day, offering to deliver Bokomo products to homesick South Africans. Apparently, the taste of Bokomo cereals is a strong reminder of home and the activation would also have resonated with those back home.

I am not quite sure how this catering for a marketing 10, 000km away will end, but for the moment it's intriguing enough to win another Orchid for Checkers and one for Bokomo.

Sometimes, advertising creatives can be too clever for their own good, showing off with their "intellectual" prowess or subtlety of writing.

Their mates at the coffee shop would probably nod their man-buns in agreement – but what if ordinary people go "Huh?" when exposed to their arcane marketing poetry?

Cerebral ads

That's my concern with the latest series of "high art" ads for Investec. The theme is "never settle for ordinary" but the way they illustrate that concept is merely odd.

It's all in a moody almost-monotone – and we see a woman "walking over" a chair; another scribing circles in the sand and, finally, a man leaping into the air.

The clever lines are "Think on your feet", "Impossible? We like those odds" and "Fly in the face of convention."

Except that these executions just seem to fly in in the face of common sense. They get Investec an Onion from me because it is trying to communicate with a wide audience, not an incestuous circle of those in the know.

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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