

Life is a journey: enjoy (or loathe) the ads



By [Brendan Seery](#)

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There is something about travel and the way it has to transport you - and not just physically...

One of the things psychiatrists and neuroscience experts tell you is that taking your young children away - anywhere out of their normal environment - has the effect of turbocharging their young brains.

And, when we're older, travel for pleasure or to explore also has the ability to expand or alter your mind. People who love to travel have never lost that childhood sense of wonder, of adventure, of wanting to experience and see new things.

That is the emotion that Emirates Airlines taps into neatly with its latest TV commercial.

It starts off by saying that the world today seems like a more familiar place - but then wonders if those travelogues you read, those beautiful scenes you have as a screensaver on your PC, are real. Is it really that stunning?

It answers the question by saying: There is only one way to know. Be there.

Be there - from the African savannah watching the King of Beasts; to a tai chi class high above a city skyline; a snowcapped rugged mountain range; a European city fountain; a cruise ship passing under Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The images are brilliant and alluring. But, cleverly, the producers also touched on the other sense that works overtime when we're travelling - taste. Be there, it says, to taste their cheese, their steaks, their pies ("and look at that crust!").

It wraps up with the exhortation to fly Emirates to "countless destinations" and has one of the better punchlines around today: "Going is Believing."

If your travelling shoes don't start twitching after you've seen this ad, then you must have one foot in the grave.

It's a great piece of marketing from an organisation that does marketing at the highest level, so it gets an Orchid.

What is interesting is that the TV execution and associated print campaigns are running in parallel with a PR offensive by the airline to fight possible legislative changes in the US that would make it more difficult for state-backed foreign carriers like Emirates to operate there. That's because the airline has been the biggest growing business in the skies in the past two decades... and many other players are getting worried as it gobbles up their market share.

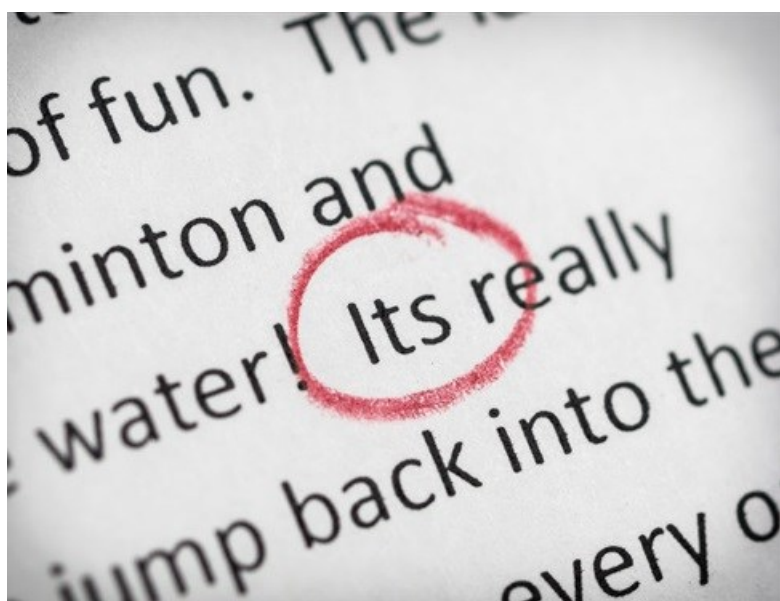
The PR campaign points to the impressive economic benefits the airline has brought to the US and says restrictions on it will compromise the "Open Skies" policy that has seen a global expansion of air travel. Interesting - and something to watch.

One last comment on the ad, though: I don't know whether the media planners did their homework properly. To flight an airline ad in a re-run of an episode of *Air crash Investigation* does seem a bit odd.

While on the subject of flying, I couldn't help but notice that there are few spaces that are not occupied by a marketing message. The latest is the "hangers" on airport buses - you know, the things you hold on to as you stand.

One bus had one that caught my eye. It was for Cell C and I read it as we waited - and waited - for the bus to leave the terminal building for the aircraft.

It said something about "With data costs from 10c per MB, you'll be happy to wait". It neatly utilised an opportunity to connect with someone's down time and make the point about its cheap data. And you couldn't miss it. So an Orchid for you, Cell C.



Apostrophes: tricky punctuation © Brad Calkins – 123RF.com

However, on the return flight, there was a similar ad - but one that just made me mad, because it's the kind of thing that leaves a brand looking dumb or sloppy or both. It was for McCarthy, the car seller, which, we were told, was "Proudly Bidvest". It was the main line that got me: "Keeping South African's on the road since 1910."

"South African's" what?

What glaring fault is there in our education system that an adult (or at least three in this case, because one assumes someone checked it and another signed off on it) wants to chuck an apostrophe into a word in every instance where there is an "s" at the end of it?

It's (see that, McCarthy?) not just because it is a grammar horror, it's because this basic mistake makes you wonder about the competence of the company.

Especially because this should have been checked and signed off. And it is the gift that has the power to carry on giving because it is at eye level, in front of hundreds of passengers a day.

I don't know who is responsible, so the Onion goes to McCarthy. Remove those eyesores before you damage your brand further.

I'll bet my bottom dollar that Bidvest founder Brian Joffe knows how to use an apostrophe. And this sort of thing would not make him proud...

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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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