

Let's drown our sorrows

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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An Orchid to Spar. And an Onion to you, Telkom, because your marketing and your customer service is a mess.



Screengrab from the ad.

Please don't shoot me, you haters of Eusebius – but the other day I had a chuckle on his programme... not at him or because of him, but because of a comment from a listener.

She was talking about voting: not for the ANC, because they steal everything; not for the EFF, because they're racist; not for the DA, because they don't know what they're doing. She said she would be voting for Hlaudi Motsoeneng and his party, because at least he made her laugh.

“ It sometimes staggers me that people can still find things to laugh about in SA these days. But I guess it's one of the things that does set us apart as a nation (apart from the fact we want to blame everyone else for our troubles...) ”

So, I must say, I found the graveyard humour in the latest duo of ads for Tops@Spar – the supermarket chain's booze shops – quite funny.

The first ad has the tag line “South Africa: a serious country”, while the follow-up (also released earlier this month) is “South Africa: an even more serious country”.

In both ads, there are the comic skits about life around us every day... taken to an absurd level (or even a not-so-absurd level, because the scenarios are true).

There's a woman filling up her car and watching in amazement as the figure goes up and up. She offers her wallet. Not enough. Her expensive gold watch. Not enough. And eventually her car keys. She asks: Can I pay it off in installments?

The gag is less punchy than it would have been in December, following those record fuel price levels, and because prices have gone down considerably in the past month – but it still hits home.

Then we see a guy in Cape Town, looking at a scare story about how the city has run out of water – and then debating whether to drink the glass of water he is holding... or throw it over his scooter, which is being consumed by flames.

Another one, which is close to home for me, is the woman whose car almost gets gobbled up by a pothole. That's because I've just spent R5,500 getting my daughter's car fixed after a wheel fell off, because of damage when she hit a pothole.

Finally, there's the guy who arrives home to find the power off (again) – as has happened to us four times already this month... but that is an improvement! – and tries to clamber through the electric fence at the top of his wall. Then he sees the street lights coming on.

Shocking... literally.

The punch line is that when things get serious, get to Tops at Spar, buy some booze and drown your sorrows.

It works and it is a bit of a chuckle when we do need it most – like when we're listening to Eusebius.

An Orchid to Spar.

I find it an interesting coincidence that, within days of my Telkom ADSL line at home slowing to a mere trickle (I looked at a nine-minute estimated time to download a 4Mb file, for example), I got an SMS message from them advising me that "Good news! There is fibre in your neighbourhood!" and would I like to change over.

I've known there has been fibre in my neighbourhood for more than a year, Telkom, but I am still not certain who to go with.



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This shows me, though, that you are cynically either throttling back ADSL users to force them to go fibre, or are not doing any maintenance on the ADSL system for the same reason.

Either way, it's extremely cynical and negative marketing, because it not only gets my back up as a consumer, but also confirms to me that you really don't give a damn about me.

That being the case, why should I trust you when it comes to fibre? And I am not even talking about the myriad horror stories out there, about people trying to follow all your procedures to cancel their services and finding themselves blacklisted after they cancel debit orders.

Your marketing, and your customer service is a mess, Telkom.

So you can collect your first Onion now and the second one will probably come through sometime next week, at about the same pace as your ADSL downloads...

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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