

Less toil and trouble?

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

26 Nov 2019

Intriguing: Washing up liquid goes toe-to-toe with one of the big guns but thumbs down to Old Mutual, who has done little for its image in recent times.



Screengrabs from the ad.

Here's a thing which is probably not going to be that popular: SABC News is still doing a good job. Every day, as someone whose job is news, I regularly dip into SABC2's *Morning Live* programme, to get an accurate update of what is happening right around the country.

And it also gives me the opportunity to take in one of the hardest-working ad segments out there: early morning TV, which aims to catch mom, dad and the kids before they head out the door to school and work.

So, I get to see an interesting combination of brand and retail advertising, as well as for products I normally don't think about.



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There is seldom just brand advertising in these time slots, because the ads also have to push people to buy, so the bias is often heavily on retail.

An ad which manages to capture both its brand essence and to plant the seed of possible purchase in the minds of viewers, is the one for MAQ washing-up liquid. MAQ is a challenger brand, taking on some of the big names, which have become household words over the decades.

MAQ's washing-up liquid has decided to go toe-to-toe with the market leader, Sunlight, which has as its USP (unique selling point or proposition) that it can wash more dirty crockery, cutlery and pots and pans than anyone else with the same volume of its detergent.

Not so, MAQ is arguing, although I have seen no firm facts to back up its challenge.



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What it does set out to show – with outrageous exaggeration (but who's never done that in advertising?) is that its washing-up liquid churns out huge amounts of foam.

So we see ordinary beings stopped in their tracks – in their cars, on their morning jogs, in the city streets – by what looks like an invasion of alien foam. It pours out of windows, bursts into blobs which shower down on people, it blocks roads.

Eventually, it attracts the attention of a TV crew, who report that MAQ users are gobsmacked about how far the washing up liquid goes.

It's a nice riposte to the Sunlight claim – years old now – that “just this one teaspoon” of Sunlight will clean a whole bunch of dirty dishes, pots and pans.

Funnily enough, the ad also managed to penetrate my consumer consciousness.

After all, on a few days every week, I do the washing up.

I am not a SNAG (sensitive new-age guy), mind you, it's just that even I feel bad occasionally about my laziness and not helping out more around the house.

And, on occasions, I have found, with an especially greasy set of pots and pans in the mix, my Sunlight hasn't lasted long enough and I've had to refill the basin. (Oh, the woes of domestic life...)

So, I might just grab a bottle of MAQ some time and see how it goes. And that's advertising which works. Advertising which works gets an Orchid from me. And trust me, on *Morning Live*...

It's a wonder Old Mutual has any feet left in which to shoot itself. Not only are they embroiled in a vicious legal brawl with one-time chief executive Peter Moyo, as shareholders look on and weep, what little reputation the group has left for plain dealing has just been severely damaged.



Forget finances, Old Mutual is set to pay dearly in the reputation stakes

Neeran Naidoo, Hewers 6 Sep 2019



The story about the angry family who dumped the body of their dead relative at an Old Mutual office in frustration at not receiving his insurance payout, flashed around the country.

There was little sympathy for Old Mutual, which flip-flopped between apologising and claiming the money had been paid out a few days before the body was dumped (clearly no one told the family, though...)



South Africa 'cancels' Old Mutual after body arrives at offices for proof of death

Shereesa Moodley 20 Nov 2019



Although the company did jump around when the magnitude of the brand fail became evident, that still does not detract from the fact that sloppy customer service cost it money.

So Old Mutual gets an Onion from me for forgetting one of the golden rules of marketing: the cheapest form is excellent customer service, because happy clients are loyal clients and retaining satisfied customers costs fractions of going out to "conquer" new ones.

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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