

# An Orchid for a sparkling ad...

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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And an Onion to a PR man for his 'shotgun' press release that greatly annoyed the receiver.



Screen grab from the ad.

People are sometimes surprised that I give Orchids to ads I don't like or even products which are not particularly to my taste. My response is that, in journalism, as in advertising, there is one golden rule: You are *not* the target market.

So, I am certainly not the target market for Bernini's sparkling wine (shhh... don't say the 'champ' word). I am no fan of sparkling wine – why mess up the fruit of the vine with carbon dioxide? – and have been known to give away bottles of the expensive French stuff when it lands on my desk.

*“ Neither am I a sophisticated millennial, nor upwardly mobile. However, I am able to recognise an ad which does address that market... and I am able to recognise good production values and use of imagery. So I was impressed with the newest Bernini TV spot. ”*

The ad starts with a trio of hot 'n happening babes in what looks like a normal hotel room. One of them sees a red button on which is emblazoned: "Push for sparkle"... so she does.

And the whole scene starts transforming – fixtures disappear and a bar appears, along with all the ingredients necessary for a party, right down to the Cinderella-like transformation of them all into glittery fashion magazine models.

And, naturally, they all have bottles of Bernini's sparkliest best in hand.

It's not a new idea – that a product will supposedly change your world – but the way it's been done captures the energy and some of the innocence of having fun. And with the festive season approaching, there will be young women out there drawn to the ad and the drink.

So Orchids to Bernini and Ola! Films director Amy Allais for a sparkling piece of commercial making. It's all the more interesting because most of the effects were achieved on set, rather than with computer-generated images, which is becoming the norm.

## How Not To Do Public Relations

Today's lesson in How Not To Do Public Relations comes from Given Tshabalala who, because his communications come from what appears to be his own personal Gmail account, could be a lone wolf freelancer. Nothing wrong with that – and even if he worked for a PR company, there would be no guarantee he would learn the error of his ways, because many in the business simply don't know what they're doing.

Given sent me an email, in which he rather testily remarks: "I have been trying to get hold of you unsuccessfully."

Who the 'you' is, is not apparent from his standard PR bimbo first line: "Good day, I trust this email finds you well."

*“ Good day who, Given? And why would you trust this finds me well? Do you know something about my health that I don't? Then he committed Mistake Number Two in the “Howto annoy journalists” handbook: “Yesterday, I sent you a press release, please can you confirm if you have received it.” ”*

Oh yes, Given, I am about to drop everything because your name instantly springs to the top of my mind, as does your press release. Journalists get so few of them it's a real earth-shattering event when one arrives. (That, by the way, is sarcasm... for the benefit of those who might not get it.)

Your press release was about Nigeria recently hosting the African Trade Forum co-hosted by the Rockefeller Foundation, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission. I also discovered why you had not managed to contact the nameless person you were referring to. You sent the mail to me, but addressed it to him – and he works for *Business Live*.

Clearly, what you did there, Given, was prepare a “shotgun” press release (so called because its contents get sprayed everywhere) and then lost track of where you had sent it. Whoever paid you for this work wasted their money. Perhaps you (and other similarly dim PRs) might learn something from this Onion.



#OrchidsandOnions: Mahindra's tongue-in-cheek challenge to the bakkie big boys, and Mediclinic's marketing is sick

Brendan Seery 7 Nov 2018



We received this note from Trevor Fortuin in Randfontein in response to my awarding an Orchid last week to Mahindra's latest TV ad:

“Brendan Seery's observations on advertisers are normally spot on – but his position on Mahindra's latest ad – ‘Send-up

tops' is way off the mark for the following reasons:

- Farmers don't drop other farmers' fences.
- If the journey to return the lamb to its rightful owner was of sufficiently long distance to require an overnight stop, how did the lamb get to the pick-up point in the first place?
- Was that lamb so physically different to others that the central character immediately recognises the lamb as belonging to someone he knows – yeah right.

“No apologies to Brendan – this was not his best critique.”

Well Trevor, no apologies from me either... because I did make the point (I thought clearly, but apparently not) that this commercial is a spoof and a bit of fun. Facts and logic do not apply in such cases.

## 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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