

Walk in these slippers

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Reach for a Dream: this campaign should touch your heart; Santam's false claims leave its customers crying 'onion' tears...

The awfulness of the coronavirus pandemic and the destruction of the economy, as well as the lives of millions of South Africans, has probably blinded us to everyday sorrows and tragedies – as well as the stories of hope – which surround us.

And those of us fortunate enough to have a bit to fall back on find ourselves so overwhelmed by the need out there that it's difficult to focus on where to give the little we can.

So, I was touched by the TV ad I saw this week for the Reach for a Dream Foundation's Slipper Week campaign, which ended on Sunday, 16 August.

For those who don't know, the foundation "grants magical dreams" to children between the ages of three and 18 who are fighting life-threatening illnesses.

Those kids may or may not survive – that's the harsh reality. And so, why not try and give them that little bit of joy and magic if their time on earth is to be short?

On the foundation's website, it says it has been responsible for making just under 20,000 "dreams come true", touching 32,000 lives in 2018 alone.

The TV ad promotes Slipper Week, where you can buy outrageously cute or strange slippers and support the worthy cause. Or you can make a donation.

Wimpy has come on board to help put the campaign together, pledging to give a free coffee to anyone who donates R30 or more.

If the ad doesn't touch you, then you have a heart of stone, and it will make you offer up your own silent thanks for your own little blessings.



We see a number of kids who are fighting serious illnesses. They look absolutely normal and that makes it even more poignant when you realise the struggles below the surface.

All, no matter their situation, have that naiveté and hope that is there for all human beings before they reach a certain age and get overwhelmed by cynicism.

But the punchline – “Let’s prove that dreams can’t be locked down” – is superb because it speaks to our current situation and to the belief that the human spirit is always able to soar above adversity.

An Orchid for the Reach for a Dream Foundation and another to Wimpy for lending its brand creative muscle to the exercise.

Back to the cynical side of this job.

When, as a company, you fight tooth and nail to stop honouring your financial commitments and you’re only finally forced to do so by the looming possibility of regulatory or court action, you’ve been dragged kicking and screaming to do the right thing, then do not, under any circumstances, try to paint yourself as the good guy in your marketing communications.

That’s what insurer Santam did this week in gushingly announcing it had paid out more than [R500 million in business interruption claims](#) to its clients affected by the Covid-19 lockdown.

Santam swiftly pays over R500 million to contingent business interruption policyholders

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Santam, South Africa's largest short-term insurer, has to date paid out R506 million of the R1 billion allocated for urgent relief to policyholders in the hospitality, leisure and non-essential retail services industries who have Contingent Business Interruption (CBI) extension in their policy cover.

The company commenced relief payments on 5 August, and had by this morning (Thursday, 13 August) already paid out R506 million in relief to 1315 policyholders. The relief payments are a meaningful contribution to some of the most vulnerable small and medium-sized policyholders who have been worst impacted by the lockdown.

The company, along with a number of other insurers, had fought against the payouts, trying to argue that, while the pandemic itself was covered, the damage wrought by the lockdown (as direct consequence of the virus) was not.

A court case is pending against Santam from one of its policyholders and the financial authorities got the company – and the other insurers – to agree to a payout. This will not have to be paid back, regardless of the court case results.

However, in announcing its magnanimous (forced) gesture, Santam said it had reacted “swiftly”.

What utter hogwash – as many of your policyholders, who couldn't wait and whose businesses went under as a result of your fighting the claims, will attest.

Moral of the story: would you trust an insurer which not only fights against paying out, but then is so tone deaf to the national mood that it tries to paint itself as some sort of quick-acting hero?

The claims process is one matter, but whoever wrote, and whoever approved, this insulting, brand-damaging statement should be made to plant a whole field of onions to join this one I am giving as a reminder not to abuse your customers...

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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