

Ad may not be finger-lickin' good but it's out of this world

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Regular readers will know that, when it comes to advertising, local will always be *lekker* for me.

Apart from the fact that we need to remind ourselves of our unique national identity – and this comes across clearly in the best, and funniest, of our home-grown ads – there is also the reality that producing commercials in this country creates jobs and builds businesses.

Even though I'm not a fan of the product offering of Chicken Licken, I recognise a good local ad when I see it.

The latest has been put together by Joe Public, which only recently won the Chicken Licken business, and it continues in the same vein of funny and quirky, with a strong local flavour.

In this case we see a developing major news story, where a space station orbiting Earth is in urgent need of resupply. Commentators stress that what is being sent up in the emergency mission remains top secret, although it is clearly something important, contained as it is in a gold metal case.

Afronaut Rodwell Tshabalala is the man selected for the mission and we follow him to the launch pad and then see him blasting off into space. (Interestingly, the image is that of a Russian rocket, some of which are used to launch satellites as well as their own space missions.)

The Afronaut grooves to his own beat as he heads to the space station – as only a South African can do – and delivers the emergency package to the desperate orbiters. It quickly becomes clear, as their faces light up in joy, that the package is Chicken Licken, and they have clearly been deprived of it in space, which can do awful things to a person's morale and sanity – hence the emergency.

However, when the crew opens the Chicken Licken boxes, there are only crumbs left. They look at Tshabalala in rage. And he looks at them: Joburg, we have a problem...

The tag line sums up the addictive flavour of Chicken Licken – no matter where you get the craving, you won't be able to resist.

It's a nice, light, funny ad and makes the point about the taste and "more-ish" appeal of the food.

Orchids to Chicken Licken, Joe Public and to Pete Pohorsky from Plank Productions who produced and directed it.



Screengrabs from the ad.

But it would be remiss of me when talking about Chicken Licken marketing to mention something which had bugged me for some time about the company and its founder, George Sombonos. At the risk of being accused of speaking ill of the dead (Sombonos died recently of cancer), I must remind those who wrote about him that, when it came to marketing, he was ruthless.

Everybody knows the story about how he bought the recipe for the chicken while on a visit to the US (paying \$1,000 in traveller's cheques) and how he helped turn the company into a giant, mainly because he embraced the African market. After winning a fight over trademark issues with KFC (which claimed Licken was too close to their finger-lickin' good slogan), Sombonos jumped in and registered the phrase "Soul food" – making it illegal for anyone to use the phrase, or even part of it, in relation to food in South Africa.

What annoyed me was the fact our system allows a phrase to be appropriated by someone, even when that phrase is common parlance and not the invention of the person registering it. Sombonos went further, using lawyers' letters to threaten to close down restaurants which had the word "Soul", or versions of it, in their names. It may be shrewd business, but I still don't think it is right. Someone will register "sky" soon and prevent you from using it...

My sister-in-law pointed out recently that the TV (and virally spread web) ads for Pick n Pay, featuring Ladysmith Black Mambazo (LBM), are really great. With a Christmas theme, the singers celebrate the season, as an intro to whatever special Pick n Pay wants to punt.

It's clever because, though it does accompany a hardcore marketing message, Pick n Pay has used the music of LBM to entertain us.

Entertain me and I will always be more receptive to your messages. It also helps the supermarket giant stand out from the festive season work being done by its main competitors (and Checkers is particularly active these days).

Classic marketing common sense, so an Orchid to Pick n Pay.

It was interesting to hear new Joburg mayor Herman Mashaba promising to root out the bad things the new DA administration inherited from the ANC.

More power to your arm, Sir, but I am afraid you're going to have to start practising what you preach to convince me you are serious and not just grandstanding.

The DA, where it controls municipalities, is always strong on enforcing the by-laws, except, it appears, when it comes to its own. Mr Mashaba, you have been in office 100 days, as you say – and your local government election posters will have been up for at least a month longer than that.

In my street, there are two of them on lamp-posts, which have not been removed – as your party is obliged to do in terms of the law.

Even the ANC removed their posters in my area. You get an Onion because politics is all about marketing and if you talk the talk, you must walk the walk.

I look forward to hearing the posters will be removed – and that the DA has paid an admission of guilt fine for breaking the law.

Any Orchids, Onions of your own – or just musing about the ad business - please send them to me: orchidsandonions4@gmail.com.

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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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