

Kulula.com's ad takes the cake in so many different ways, but Apple's customer service is rotten to the core...

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

24 Oct 2017

When I first met Jacob Zuma he was, believe it or not, the head of the Moral Regeneration Movement. He was still deputy president to Thabo Mbeki and, in a long conversation with him in Pretoria, he struck me as a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) type of guy. Straightforward, reliable and, yes, honest.

That image has, clearly, been blown apart by reality – but I wondered about that the other day when I had a second and a third look at an ad, which I initially thought was brilliant.

I am still in two minds about it, so – without wanting to avoid responsibility (as so many others do in South Africa) – I will be giving it both an Orchid and an Onion, and for different reasons.

When I first saw the Kulula.com video – the “Office” one in of the Don’t be a #TravelHater series – I did chuckle.

We see the office bore (who is clearly the boss, because everybody looks like they have to be there and would far rather be somewhere else) expounding on his trip to the Cape.

One especially bored worker is cutting up a chocolate cake, which has been decorated with the words “Welcome back, Derrick” in icing.

As he talks, and people get even more bored, she slices up the cake and moves the wedges to leave the message reading: “Welcome back, Dick”. She’s clearly the #TravelHater...

Being Kulula.com, the risqué humour fits in well with the brand and it gets a chuckle. In addition, it appears to have been airing on social media where, the theory goes, people are probably younger and less sensitive about their humour.

That being the case, the ad deserves an Orchid for being funny and connecting with its target audience to make the point that instead of hating everyone else’s travel stories, go out and make your own, by booking your holidays through the airline.

But... then I thought a bit more.

Was it really necessary to descend to lavatory humour to make the point? And, even though your brand is supposedly young and funky, is it clever to have slang references to a penis in your marketing?



Screengrabs from the ad.

Given the potential to irritate some people and, therefore, to lose the marketing impetus of the ad, the spot also gets an Onion.

However, as I said, I am still quite conflicted. So let me know what you think: brendans@citizen.co.za.

Here’s another sad tale of how “stick to the rules” personnel can damage your brand.

My friend and colleague, Caroline Hurry, was recently the victim of a house invasion where, among other things, three of her Apple computers were taken by the gun-toting robbers.

Clutching an insurance pay out, she went along to the Apple shop to go about replacing them. One of the machines stolen was almost brand new, having only been bought a few weeks previously.

At the time she bought that laptop, Caroline took out an extended three-year warranty for peace of mind. It wasn’t cheap, being Apple.

So, when she went to look at a replacement, she asked whether the extended warranty could be transferred to the new

machine.

The young clevers, both salesperson and store manager, told her abruptly: No!”

I don’t think that was an unreasonable request, given that she had already paid the company to insure a machine.

But, apparently the rules are the rules and presumably, the person who buys Caroline’s machine from the “fence” might well be able to enjoy that extended warranty. Apple would, apparently, not object to that...

Caroline, a long-time Apple user, turned on her heel and walked out. And she bought a PC laptop, “for half the price!”

Well done, Apple, another lost customer.

Great customer service and, because customer service is the cheapest form of marketing, and you, therefore, blew an opportunity to keep someone coming back to your brand, you get a (non-transferrable) Onion...

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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