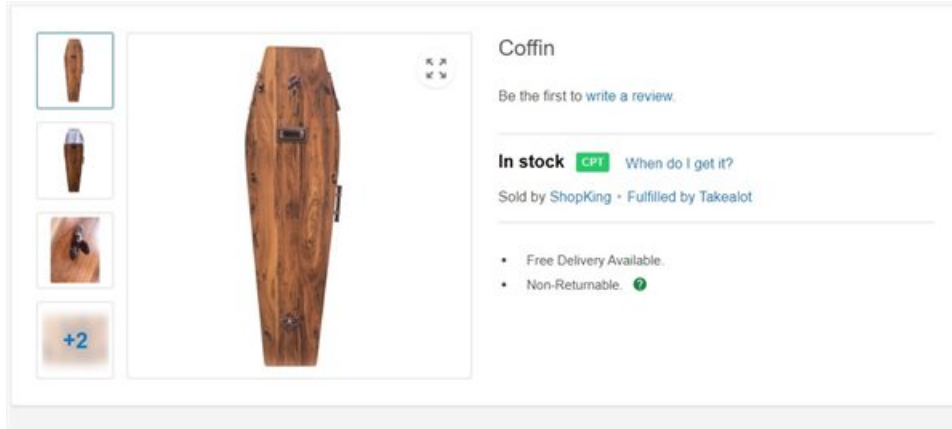


It would be a grave mistake to order your coffin too late

By  Howard Feldman

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Because 2020 wasn't weird enough, South Africans are apparently now able to purchase coffins on popular retail site Takealot. The items sell for just under R5000 per box and the company has stipulated that they will not accept returns. Which I guess is understandable, if one thinks about it.



[Description](#) [Product Information](#) [Reviews](#)

Most popular and traditional style veneer coffins are manufactured using real wood. The wood veneer is laminated either onto chipboard. Machine cut and hand polished with a variety of wood effects, Opens at the top or bottom

The description reads as follows: "Most popular and traditional style veneer coffins are manufactured using real wood. The wood veneer is laminated either onto chipboard. Machine cut and hand polished with a variety of wood effects, Opens at the top or bottom"

Why anyone would require a bottom opening is not something I can get my head around, and nor do I wish to even try. The accompanying photo does make it look rather lovely, and I wondered, if given this attractive price, if it wasn't something worth buying to keep in the garage for that rainy day.

Perhaps, I considered further if it was worth purchasing in bulk (think 2 for the price of 1) but changed my mind when I pictured the Takealot tuk-tuk thing arriving at my house with a few coffins sticking out the back.

What would the neighbours think?

I also checked for reviews on the site, and after finding none, realised that it would have completely freaked me out if I had. After all, who would be the person to rate the purchase? And what would warrant 5-star rating? The recipient might have the time, but it is unlikely they would have the means, given that the coffins are fairly limited in design and provides little room for carry-on baggage.

If one is to pack something for eternity, I can't imagine it would a device that could communicate with an online store that has difficulty in delivering to the Free State, let alone the afterlife. Because where would one charge it?

The decision to launch this limited range is a fascinating one. Is it reflective of the increased need for death-accessories (my term, not theirs), or is it simply a coincidence? To be fair, there is not a business in the world that has not called a meeting and posed the following question. "Covid is a black swan event. We couldn't predict it and our business has been compromised. The question that we need to ask ourselves is how can we turn this into an opportunity?"

Is it at all possible that at the Takealot meeting, that some bright young thing (with no comorbidities) stuck up their virtual Zoom hand and said, "People will be needing coffins!" And then others, who weren't distracted by their children who were now running naked through the lounge, said, "Now that's a brilliant idea!"

And so the Death range was launched.

One of the challenges has to be delivery. In some areas, we are warned, this could take a number of working days. In essence, this requires the need to be quite close to the medical status of the intended user. The embarrassment of a situation when aunty Rosie, who made a sudden but unexpected recovery, walks into her dining room to find an open casket (top and bottom), could be extreme.

And I can't imagine that any amount of talking could explain that away. On the flip side (excuse that expression) waiting too late to place the order is no less a problem as one would have to delay a funeral whilst trying to track the delivery.

Covid has driven most of us, at some point, to the edge of insanity. 100 days into lockdown our fragile grasp of reality has all but slipped away. Most of us are hardly able to distinguish between Wednesday and Friday and if we are it's only because someone told us what day of the week it is. It is clear that businesses are no different. The lunatics have taken over the asylum and they are now selling us coffins.

Worst part is that I don't know whether to wish Takealot good luck with this venture or not.

ABOUT HOWARD FELDMAN

Howard Feldman is one of SA's leading entrepreneurs and Head of Marketing & People at Synthesis. His experience is global and extensive, spanning more than 20 years of working as a businessman, philanthropist and social commentator. Feldman was the chairperson of the Board of the South African Jewish Report, the only weekly Jewish newspaper in Africa, and he is a global keynote speaker, business strategist, author and morning drive show host.

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