

# Trevor Noah tourism ad captures the essence of SA

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

15 Nov 2023

Frankly, I don't care how much comedy megastar Trevor Noah was paid to shoot the commercial for the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA).



Firstly, he is an international icon – and those don't come cheap. If we don't expect that he should have done the ad for free as an act of patriotism (what nonsense is that?), then let's not quibble about how much he was paid.

## Hats off

I accept, though, the TBCSA's stand that he was not paid the R33m that is being bandied about in some media and by those eager to jump on the bandwagon of criticism of the government...the latter because many wrongly perceived this was taxpayer money provided by SA Tourism, a government body. TBCSA is a private organisation.

And hats off to them for putting this commercial together and getting Noah to front it.

Have a look at the video and put yourselves in the shoes of someone overseas seeing it for the first time. Trevor is engaging, he is funny and, most of all he is – like most of us – someone who doesn't stand on ceremony. No airs and grace but just an open, welcoming person, just what you can expect in South Africa.

## Humour and energy

Then, he goes through a list of questions which seem silly to us (and obviously scripted) but they do show some of the queries tour operators field regularly from potential clients around the world.

He deals with them all – from ones about our wildlife to our five-star hotels – with a mixture of humour and energy.

“Seriously, Michelle, are you even watching this commercial?” Noah answers to the question “is South Africa fun?” ... and then proceeds, at breathtaking speed, to detail just how much fun you can have in this diverse, beautiful country.



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Like with the SA Tourism ad featuring Springbok captain Siya Kolisi earlier this year, the TBCSA/Noah production is not only a great showcase of South Africa for foreigners but also a reminder to those of us here who sit perpetually whingeing, about how fortunate we are when it comes to tourist opportunities in our own backyard.

Noah gets the tone just right – and that's the key to the success of the ad. If an oke like this says “pull in”, then why wouldn't you?

Orchids to Noah and TBCSA for a great, effective, optimistic ad.

## Selling data

The buzzword in marketing a few years ago used to be “CRM”, which stood for Customer or Consumer Relationship Marketing. In essence, this meant that brands should keep information on their customers, with a view to making the user experience better but also to ensuring the next sale.

That idea has become somewhat perverted over time as many brands are not using the information they glean from you solely for improving your experience or making it easier or more desirable for you to buy again, but are shamelessly selling on your data to other marketers.

You would think, though, that a vast global company which has built its name on being a technological “disruptor” of a particular sector would be able to understand and keep track of existing clients to improve that brand-consumer relationship.



TBCSA partners with Trevor Noah to promote South Africa to the world

13 Nov 2023



Not so with accommodation rental site Airbnb which, under the guise of wanting to screen out renters who cause trouble or have parties, now requires a picture of your government-issued ID document.

Never mind that, in our case especially, you may have been a repeat customer who has never caused any issues with hosts...and never mind that you already know we're good for the money.

By doing this sort of thing, it sours a relationship (not to mention sails close to the wind on protection of privacy laws, because it never was a requirement previously) – especially when you consider that AirBnb's competitors locally. We've been looking around for a family break next year and the booking was declined because I refused to supply the required photo ID. My questions to Airbnb fell on deaf years. So much for customer care...

## Voted with the wallet

We voted with the wallet and went to a local competitor, afristay, which featured the same place but which required no ID other than email confirmation and cellphone contact (and of course, the card payment went through smoothly).

Ironically, Airbnb acknowledges that this new “ security” process is to bring it more into line with conventional hotels – which require formal ID on check-in – the very competition the new platform sought to improve upon in the first place...

It is insulting to be suddenly told: We don't trust you by an organisation with which you have spent a considerable amount of money. Or to reverse Dale Carnegie's famous slogan: How to alienate friends and lose customers.

That will always get a marketing Onion from me.

## 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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