

Duo of health ads, take a bow

By [Brendan Seery](#)

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The Onion goes to Windhoek Lager, for relying on automatic 'programmatic' digital advertising, which damages the brand.



Screen grab from the ad.

Having animals and being a pet lover is not often regarded as a rational trait. It is supposed to be all about emotions, about how humans who struggle to express love to other humans have no such problem expressing it to a dog or a cat.

And having known a few strange pet fanatics in my time, I would say there is a little bit of truth in that.



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But loving animals is not all irrational. Studies have shown that just having animals around you can improve your physical health. And animals are used in all manner of physical and psychological rehabilitation programmes.

Once you commit to an animal, it is a lifetime commitment. You took them into your life and are, therefore, responsible for

them. And to not give them the best you can afford – or, on occasion, more than you can afford – is a betrayal of their trust.

So, it's comparatively easy to lay a serious guilt trip on your average, reasonably well-off suburban family when it comes to pets and their comfort and health.

Recently, the veterinary hospital had no doubt I would not blink at the R3,500 deposit they required on a Sunday afternoon, when I brought our dog into the emergency room. I had run over her as she lay behind the wheels of the car. There is no worse sound than that of bump, crunch and squeals of agony.

Fortunately, there were no bones broken and no internal organs damaged. But the leg flesh was badly torn and must heal slowly because it can't be stitched.

“ Simple as it sounds, it was not cheap. I've forked over about R12,000 so far. Duma (the victim) may well have said: You squash me, I squash your wallet... and it's not over. ”

Which is probably why I was magnetically drawn to the latest Dotsure pet insurance TV ad. It features the Van Dyks, a couple speaking about their animals, how they lost two of them in a space of months and, with a combined vet bill of more than R40,000, they wished they had pet medical insurance.

Like us, they love their dogs, and the dogs are part of the family. Like us, they were prepared to pay... but nobody has a bottomless pit of money.

What is touching is the woman's comment that had she had pet insurance for the second dog, it might still be alive.

So, I am now going to look at Dotsure, which promises plans to suit your pocket. Perhaps it's timing, perhaps I'm in the perfect target-market space, but it has done its job.

So, you get an Orchid from me, Dotsure. I reckon your ads have generated plenty of business.

Another can't-ignore-it ad this week came from – wait for it – a government department!

On behalf of the national department of health, the print ad was deliberately designed to look like one for a fast-food special.

It featured a bacon cheeseburger, chips and a Coke and looked delicious – until you read the copy.

“Obesity combo – served with cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.”

A label on the glass of Coke, with the skull-and-crossbones logo of death rammed it home: “Mind what you eat and drink.”

A simple, yet effective way of putting across the message that better eating is the first step in making our country healthier.

It gets this week’s second Orchid.



While on the subject of health, I was drawn to an [online piece](#) in the *Daily Mail* in the UK, all about how bowel cancer, hitherto thought to be the sole preserve of the 50-plus group and those who consume the sorts of food our department of health is trying to demonise, is now showing up in younger and apparently healthy people.

Many of the people spoken to in the *Daily Mail* piece were low consumers of meat, all had low or average BMI (body mass index) scores and most were fit and exercised regularly.

It was a pretty grim subject for a read.

There was a bizarre juxtaposition of the ads which popped up on the page. They were all for Windhoek Lager and the message was happiness and party time.

Clearly, Windhoek’s ad planners did not deliberately do this, but their reliance on automatic “programmatic” digital advertising – where a computer sends your ads based on numbers, not on content – led them to some, albeit slight, brand damage.



The only thing automatic ad buying needs now is the human touch

Warren Ravinsky 8 Apr 2019



The point is that over-reliance on programmatic can do far worse damage to your brand. Imagine Windhoek’s Lager flying alongside porn or awful, racist, violent content...

The Onion goes to Windhoek for allowing this to happen. The unquestioning fascination for all things digital saw your brand’s image placed in the hands of a computer programme, which you don’t know and can’t trust...

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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