

The solution with sports branding

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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A friend of mine who runs a global company from London is somewhat cynical when it comes to sports sponsorship. Why, he asks, would you want to put your company brand on Everton shirts (or any other)?



If the team wins, will your potential customers associate your brand positively with that success? And, conversely, will you take a brand reputation hit (by association) if the team loses? More than that, though, will you see a spike in sales of your widgets on the Monday following a successful team sporting performance over the weekend?

With the exception of motorsport – where the American auto industry proved beyond a doubt that what wins on a Sunday sells on a Monday – I tend to agree with him. Does Emirates, or Etihad airlines, which support global league football, put more bums in seats on their aircraft because of the team's success? I don't think you can make that measure accurately, so I am always a tad cynical when it comes to sports sponsorships.

However, what sponsoring a major sporting brand does do is give you a platform – via mass media and with strategically placed ads on major playing days – to punt your brand, and if you're really clever, then a specific product.

The latter two things are what MTN got a spot on with their new 5G ad which features the Springboks. It was filming during our triumph over the All Blacks on Saturday and had a massive potential TV audience, no doubt. However, turning potential into actual – and getting a large number of eyeballs to stay on your marketing communication instead of getting another beer – is where the magic comes in.

For MTN, it was using the existing Boks to stop, “frozen in time” as they played out the frustrating position you would allegedly be in if your rugby scene suddenly froze – mid-throw-in – because your Internet connection was “buffering”.

Somewhat unfairly, I think, MTN throws the blame on slow connections on “fibre”, when in fact the real culprit is the actual traffic on a network and not the delivery system. In fact, as some people pointed out on social media RF (radio frequency) connections, which is what 5G is, are inherently slower than optic ones.



Be that as it may, though, the point gets eloquently made. So we see Bongi Mbonambi caught mid-throw, Steven “Spicy Plum” Kitsoff likewise, but muttering “not again”, while Eben Etzebeth and captain Siya Kolisi look around in disbelief. We also see the commentators, spectators and even the first-aid oaks doing the same thing.

The message is clear: Don’t let fibre ruin your experience, get MTN’s new super-fast 5G.

The ad was shot at Loftus Versfeld, over about three hours and what the MTN team – including TBWA/Hunt Lascaris and production company Plank Films – discovered was that the Boks were naturals in front of the camera. Siya is a natural comic, you can tell, and Etzebeth, who is often tongue-tied in post-match interviews, had a way of turning a glance into a

statement.

This, then, is a classic example of how to leverage your sports sponsorship. Ok, MTN does back the national team and always runs the risk of being on the wrong side of the final whistle because SA sports fans are so fickle...but in this case, everything aligned. Nice bit of humour and entertainment and an intriguing sales pitch.



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So Orchids to MTN, TBWA/Hunt Lascaris and Plank Films. Another reminder that our ad and marketing industry is still capable to producing head-turning ads.

And an additional one to the MTN group for just being selected as SA's "Most Valuable Brand".

Well done.

Misleading ads in 2022?

Misleading ads – and especially ones for credit, in a country where millions of consumers are up to their eyeballs in debt – are sleazy. More so when they involve national brands and air on large national platforms.

I was incensed this week when I could not believe what I was seeing in a joint TV promotion by retail giant Makro and Finish, the maker of cleaning tablets you use in a dishwasher. It was aired by Brand Power, the people who claim to bring you the best deals because they do the comparing you can't. (Oh, really, you mean the "bargains" people pay you to call "bargains"? That is another matter, though...)

So the Brand Power person asks breathlessly: "How much does a dishwasher cost? R5,000? R2,000? R1,000? R500?"



Each price shatters as she continues: "You can now own a dishwasher from as little as R194 a month with Makro."

Of course, in compliance with the National Credit Act, the details are carried at the side of the TV screen, in type so vanishingly small that no one is either going to see it in the first place or going back and having a look.

If you do so, then you'll find out the real price of a dishwasher. And that would be? R5,000? Nope. R6,000? Negative again. It will cost you – at R194 a month for 36 months – a total of R6,983. Even then the details are not correct. The total price, according to the ad, is R6,951. However, if you multiply 36 by 194, you get 6,983.

On the other side of the briefly appearing pic of the dishwasher and appealing price is this other piece that few will notice: “Price indicative may vary based on account activity. Fees subject to change based on customer risk profile.” In other words, your “bargain” might cost you even more.



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The fact that the language used focuses on the apparently low payment, which is a lot lower than the “can you guess” prices, shows that this ad is intended to be misleading. It is meant to lead people to believe they don't have to pay as much as R5,000 for the dishwasher, when in fact they will end up paying around R2,000 more than that.

This is why people, particularly the poor and less educated, end up with huge amounts of money owed like a millstone around their necks.

It's wrong and the way it has been out together shows it is out to mislead. And that is not honest.

Dishonest advertising will always get an Onion from me. So, Makro, Finish and BrandPower you all get an Onion. You should be ashamed of yourselves...

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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