

# In the old days media and ad agencies made fortunes

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

11 Sep 2013

The mass media and its dependent advertising agencies are not having it easy these days. And there are many oldish farts in the industry who will tell you that they long for the good old days when newspapers, radio and TV stations all made a lot of money and ad agency bosses were able to buy wine farms and go on holiday to places beyond Vaal Dam. Frankly, I'm not convinced those days were good in any sort of way in spite of all the money.

For instance, on Sundays there was no sport by law, shops were all closed, minds were all closed and the only thing to stop you from committing suicide was the prospect of Monday morning's newspapers to see how many of the volk had been caught breaking the Immorality Act with the maid next door.

Sure, those were the days when you could set your watch by those four o'clock in the afternoon thunderstorms that used to roll in over the Highveld, drop their loads and disappear by half past four, leaving brilliant, good-and-clean-and-fresh evenings in which to enjoy our sundowners.

## Talk about change

That doesn't happen anymore, because there's a newfangled climatic thing called tropical air that comes in from over Zambia, Zim and Zaire to produce continuous cloud cover and rain at all hours of the day. Damned inconvenient and probably caused by the demise of apartheid and the fact that all sorts of things like contraband, illegal immigrants and rain can now all happily traipse willy nilly across our borders with complete impunity.

Sundowners have been replaced by midsummer bowls of hot soup in front of the television set.

Talk about change. Especially television. Apart from having access to about 80 channels, we can now watch sport on a Sunday without being struck by lightning and we can even watch the BBC news without fear of the devil or a communist infecting us with information.

And unlike all those years ago when we had a foreign white person presenting the news in impeccable Oxbridge English we now have a foreign black person presenting the news in impeccable Oxbridge English.

## A Bantu has been detained...

And talking about the news on the telly, remember those days of yore when, after two solid hours of a "Lewe Onder Die See" documentary we'd get that lavatory seat SABC logo and the only news bulletin of the day with poker faced presenters

telling us with all the solemnity usually accorded to the outbreak of a world war that South Africa had lost a cricket test against a rebel Australian eleven and that subsequently a Bantu had been detained...."

No matter what happened in South Africa in those days, somehow the upshot was that a Bantu was arrested. From blowing up an electricity pylon to Gary Player missing a putt at the British Open - the consequence was always the same. At one stage South Africa held the world record for detaining Bantus at the drop of a hat. In fact, if anyone did drop a hat, somewhere, someplace a Bantu would pay the price with instant detention.

SABC news then: "The price of gold dropped by one dollar and ounce yesterday and as a result the petrol price will increase by 80 cents and SAA domestic air fares by a further 25 percent. The Minister was not available for comment. A Bantu has been detained."

Well, things are very different these days. Bantus, thank God, are not being arrested on principle, and ministers are often known to be available for comment.

SABC news now: "In a cash-in-transit heist outside Boksburg today, 15 armed men in stolen bakkies forced a security vehicle off the road, shot and killed the five guards and sprayed passing motorists with AK-47 fire causing a further 12 deaths before escaping with R80 million. No-one has been arrested and the Minister said that cash-in-transit heists were unacceptable and that the whole question of crime needed to be addressed."

South Africa now holds the world record for addressing crime without actually doing anything about it.

And remember all those years ago when just about every second news bulletin would carry an item about a Putco bus crashing and killing all 50 passengers?

Nothing has changed. Only nowadays it's a minibus taxi crashing and killing all 50 passengers. No-one is ever arrested of course, least of all a Bantu.

## Getting back to the weather

But, to get back to the weather. Those reports at the end of the news are as inaccurate as ever. Frankly, I think that Zambian weather presenter on television all those years ago was a lot more accurate than our modern computer and satellite-assisted boffins, when he stood confidently in front of the weather map and said with a completely straight face: "There will be weather all over the country tomorrow..."

But heck, in spite of the fact that crime is rampant and that the country is being run by a petulant kindergarten, it's still a lot better than it was. In spite of the fact that nowadays you can't say anything in an advertisement without offending someone who invariably writes to the ASA and costs the agency and its client a fortune in defence costs.

Frankly I'd much rather take my chances with crime and corruption than go back to those boring old days of groveling to the SABC for a tidbit of airtime and to listen to incessant bulletins about a Bantu being detained.

## ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdyk@gmail.com](mailto:moerdyk@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

- Covid-19 boosts trust in traditional mass media - 21 Jul 2020
- Don't listen to the post-corona marketing hysteria - 17 Jun 2020
- Let's talk about marketing after corona - 15 May 2020
- Will the mass media learn anything from Covid-19? - 28 Apr 2020
- Covid-19: Secure online advice, mentoring and workshop facilitating - 23 Mar 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>