

Bringing Sun International branding to life

Positioning a South African icon such as Sun International comes with a challenge. How do you singularly represent this multi-faceted organisation, the benchmark for Southern African hospitality and gaming entertainment? How do you align iconic hotels, resorts and casinos under a mother brand and yet keep their individual nature.



Charlize Theron

This challenge gave rise to a new corporate promise for Sun International - A Million Thrills. One Destination.

When Sun International briefed Ogilvy South Africa to dramatise its new corporate positioning, the agency came up with a concept to use Charlize Theron as the star. Ogilvy believed that Theron could capture the magic of the brand and truly bring it to life.

“The key focus was to find an individual that could truly answer the brief of uniting very different brands such as gaming and resorts under the umbrella of a million thrills, one destination. Charlize as a persona was amazingly able to not only provide the promise of excitement when it came to gaming but also the grace and sensuality of resorting,” says Nunu Ntshingila, Ogilvy South Africa CEO.

To bring Theron to South Africa and to execute a commercial of this magnitude seamlessly was part of a major collaboration that involved Ogilvy and its Brand Activation 141 division, working with Sun International, Giant Films, Videovision Entertainment and well-known photographer Gerda Genis, who shot stills.



Charlize Theron

“It is one thing notionally to have her on a shoot, but when you see her in person you really experience the magnetism, aura, presence and beauty she possesses when in front of the camera, even if you are looking at a small monitor 20m away,” points out Felix Kessel, executive creative director, Brand Activation 141.

“Charlize has spectacular attention to detail and has an intuitive understanding of the camera and film language. She knew exactly what she wanted to do and in one take it was done - a consummate professional,” explains Kessel.

Her parts of the commercial were shot in three days and the stills shoot in one day. The ad captures the emotional space of “A million thrills” with Sun International locations used as the backdrop. The commercial began flying on 26 April 2008.

The sheer scale of the production meant that Giant Films would always shoot with two cameras, never asking Theron for more than two or three takes to a set-up. Crew and cast of over 250 people per day moved like a small invasion through each location.

Helicopters, hot-air balloons, cranes, boat-to-boat photography, tracking vehicles and cable-cam photography and even underwater footage were transported in and out of filming locations for this ambitious project.

“For the first time in a long time consumers will get to view a true ‘blockbuster’ commercial on TV. We look forward to South Africans’ responses as Sun International has truly invested in bringing one of the world’s most iconic actresses to South Africa to bring its brand positioning to life,” concludes Ntshingila.

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