

When the politicians help market your product... and when your website clevers damage your brand

By **Brendan Seery**

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I wonder if Mark Zuckerberg would consider a special-to-South Africa button on Facebook, which would allow the entire country to update its status.

Apart from the obvious option – junk – maybe there could be a few other options just for us: South Africa was in a relationship with the ratings agencies – now not so much; Jacob and Atul have been friends for many years; Vladimir wants to be friends; Pravin has moved in with “White Monopoly Capital”...

I know the events of the past week or so have gone beyond disturbing, but sometimes you have to chuckle. If not, you will sob. And, you have to doff your hat to anyone who takes marketing advantage of all the bad news.

Such as Pam Golding, which booked the main ad on Page 1 of *The Star* on Tuesday last week, to tout its “European Residency” programme and expertise.

But I laughed at the fortuitous placement of the ad – right next to a photo of a grumpy Jacob Zuma under the headline “Junk status puts country on a knife edge”.

The screenshot shows a newspaper page with a headline "Junk status puts country on a knife edge" and a photo of Jacob Zuma. To the right of the headline is an advertisement for Pam Golding's "EUROPEAN RESIDENCY" program. The ad features a photo of a street scene in Portugal and text describing the program's benefits, including tax advantages and access to healthcare. The ad is signed by "Pam Golding" and includes contact information for Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg offices.

Junk status puts country on a knife edge

EUROPEAN RESIDENCY

Portugal, where's named "Europe's newest darling" by the New York Post, is fast becoming the number one destination for those seeking better living for sound international investment opportunities. Its Golden Visa program offers EU Residency on property purchases over €500,000 making it a more accessible investment than most European cities. With no tax, universities, business-friendly approach, magnificent culture, delicious cuisine and state-of-the-art public transport infrastructure, living the good life in Portugal is a luxury many more can now afford.

Expert advice is key. At Pam Golding, our panel of specialists will introduce you to everything you need to know about investing in Portugal. One of these experts is here now.

CAPE TOWN: 4-4 APRIL, BROADWAY COURT
DURBAN: 1 APRIL, OSTER BICK HOTEL
JOHANNESBURG: 11-17 APRIL, THE RIVER BACH

Stake is limited. Please contact us on 021 702 8071 or info@pamgolding.co.za to reserve yours.

PAM GOLDING

Screenshot of the ad placement.

I am pretty sure Pam Golding will get plenty of response to its ad...

So they get an Orchid, although they had a bit of assistance from Number One.

We keep getting told that digital technology and the internet will be the only way to do business in the future... so it never ceases to astound, and anger, me that so many companies – including big name brands – don't bother ensuring their websites are correct.

The latest egregious examples of this don't-give-a-damn attitude come from two major fuel companies.

Heading for Magoebaskloof recently, I went on the 'Net to plan everything in a reasonably detailed way because, if you know the time you're going to stop and when you're going to eat, it's one less thing to worry about.

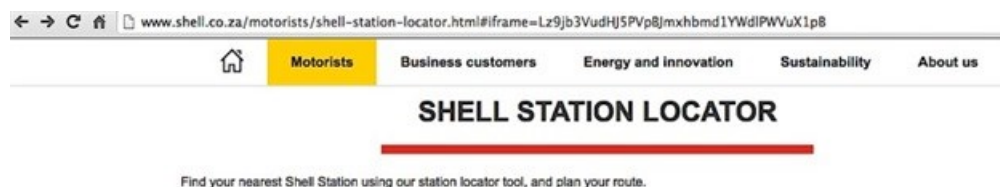
Now when I was a *laaitie*, and family Seery (four adults, a full boot and a full roof rack) went on holiday in the trusty Datsun 1200, my mother obtained all the necessary "strip" maps from the Automobile Association and was even able to phone or telex ahead to book us overnight accommodation in what was then Pietersburg and in Hanover in the Karoo.

These days, of particular interest to me is being able to get out, stretch the legs and go to the loo at regular intervals – and possibly have breakfast or lunch en route (either in a restaurant or with packed *padkos*).

Travelling with friends, we decided not to rough it too much so I decided we would head for one of the ubiquitous Ultra City/One-Stop/Star Stop places on the way.

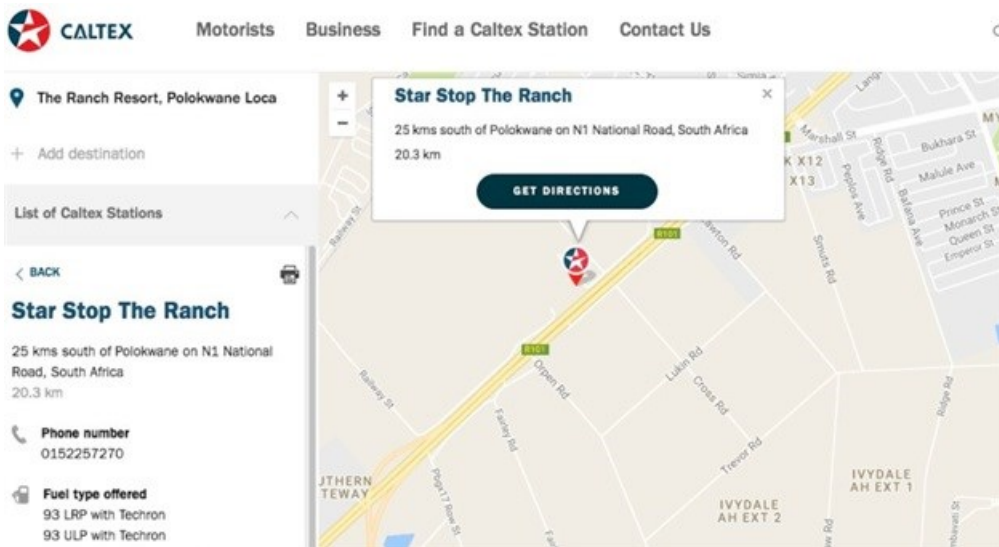
And that's when the shocking realisation hit me: the big fuel companies don't bother checking their websites.

Shell's website had a "station locator" which was simply a blank page. OK, scratch going to their Ultra City outside Polokwane.



Then I remembered there is a Caltex Star Stop just south of Polokwane. Initially, I couldn't remember the name and then it occurred to me it was called The Ranch because it was near to the resort of the same name.

Do you think the Caltex website could get it right? Whoever put it together for them just relied on the erroneous location of the station by Google Maps – in the city of Polokwane itself. Caltex even cleverly used Google's map with a Caltex logo to show where the place was... incorrectly.



In the end, Engen's One-Stops were correctly indicated on its website and we decided we would vote with our stomachs and wallets and use the one at Kranskop, about two hours north of Joburg, which has a good Wimpy.

The point is that Shell and Caltex lost our business because I was so angry that the companies did not care enough about the people keeping them in business to provide accurate information.

This so often happens in the world of digital marketing, where basic "call to action" places in cyberspace – like a company website – are left to the techies. No-one bothers checking, which is a sign not only of bad marketing but also of a badly-run business overall.

So, Onions to Shell and Caltex for not doing a job properly. Engen on the other hand, doesn't really deserve an Orchid – because all it does is do the job properly – but I am giving them and Wimpy one, anyway.

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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