

# Share generously... but not with the idiot on the moon orbiting Planet Out of Touch

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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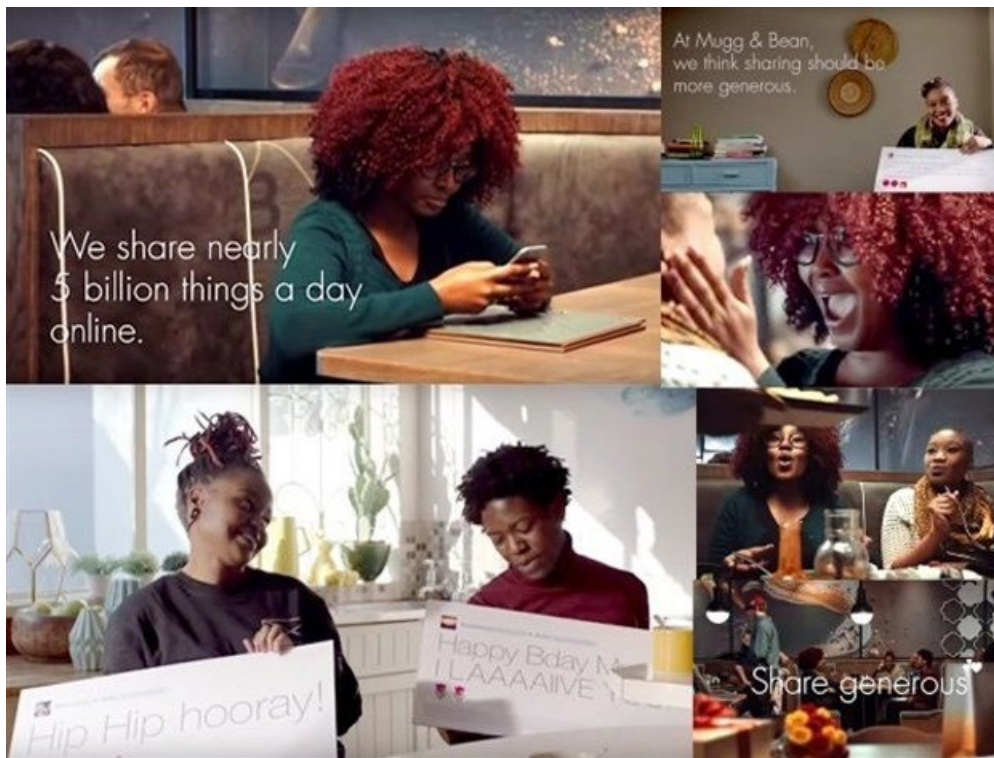
According to the latest TV ad for Mugg & Bean, every day we share five billion things online. There is no indication of who this “we” is. If it is South Africans, then we each share an average of 100 bits of information a day. That sounds way too high.

Maybe they mean the planet... who knows? What it is, is sloppy copy writing.

However, that will not divert me from acknowledging the central basic human truth at the core of the ad: that we may share humongous amounts of information with each other in cyberspace every day, but that we seldom do it face-to-face.

And that is one of the saddest sides to the tech revolution currently enveloping us: it takes away some of our humanity.

But, says Mugg & Bean, it doesn't have to be that way. Why not get together and celebrate, and generously, at a Mugg & Bean? So we see a group of friends, perhaps a bit shame-faced for sending their wishes via text or Facebook, getting together, clutching big print-outs of those messages, and surprising their friend as she sits with her lone cup of coffee in a Mugg & Bean.



Screengrabs from the ad.

The next moment, they are all deluged with cakes, muffins, drinks... all the sort of good stuff you expect from a Mugg & Bean. And there's plenty of it.

That is when the punchline – Share Generous – starts to make double sense. Share yourself, be generous with yourself. And go to a Mugg & Bean, where the helpings are generous.

It is simple, but it works.

One of the things that drives working journalists to distraction is dealing with ignorant PR people who a) don't understand how the media, and specifically a newsroom, works; b) can't write; c) wouldn't know a news angle is it ran them over in the street; and d) pester you with inappropriate information or reminder calls when you are on deadline.

You'd think then that a company which puts this on its website would know what it is doing when it comes to contacting the media:

“PR companies need to understand the relentless pressure the media face every day... which is why Stratitude provides information to targeted journalists, whilst respecting deadlines, embargo requirements and exclusives. This has helped us build strong media relations, where we ensure that each story we pitch is new, relevant, honest and timely.”

Given that, in reality, the people working for this Randburg-based company do almost exactly the opposite of what the website promises, Stratitude gets this week’s Bell Pottinger Memorial Onion for Awful Spin.

On deadline this week, I picked up the phone to a sweet voice asking after the previous editor, who departed this building last year. (Haven’t updated your media list or paid attention to news stories for at least eight months, have you, Stratitude?)

Surprised that he was no longer in the chair, she asked who the editor is currently (see comment above).

When I asked why she wanted to talk to the editor, she said she had a client who was involved in “customer loyalty” or some such rubbish. I didn’t hear the rest because my head exploded...

On what orbiting moon of Planet Out of Touch are you sitting when you think you can contact a busy editor directly? Apparently, they always talked to the previous editor. I don’t think so – he would have slam-dunked the phone just as I did. So you’re also being economical with the truth.

Why not be honest and say we bought a media list from someone, didn’t bother updating it and we don’t know what’s going on?

You’d be surprised how often this sort of thing happens. Sweet voices (they always are) phoning you up to speak to your “electronics correspondent” (what – in this day and age of shrinking newsrooms?) or to ask: “Did you get my press release?” (Oh yes – I know instantly what you’re talking about from your sexy lilt, sweetie...)

This is more than annoying, though, because an irritated journalist associates you with your client – and any client stupid or careless enough to engage idiots to carry out an important marketing function can’t be worth giving any space to.

On the Stratitude website, they say they provide “exceptional, measurable outcomes across all communication platforms”.

Measure this then: Onion for brain-dead PR.

## 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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